8-8

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
Princeton, N. J.

From the PUBLISHER.

BV 4501 .C66 1847
Colquhoun, Janet Sinclair,
1781-1846.
World's religion as
contrasted with genuine

Seminary
Donation of
Robert Carter

THE

WORLD'S RELIGION,

AS CONTRASTED WITH

GENUINE CHRISTIANITY.

BY

LADY COLQUHOUN.

DAUGHTER OF THE HON. SIR JOHN SINCLAIR.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world."

Gal. i. 3, 4.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER, 58 CANAL STREET,
AND PITTSBURG, 56 MARKET STREET.

1847.

"They praise and they admire they know not what
And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
And what delight to be by such extoll'd!
To live upon their tongues, and be their talk,
Of whom to be dispraised were no small praise!"

MILTON.

PREFACE.

THAT the things of time should so frequently be held in higher estimation than those of eternity, is a fact that appears strangely inconsistent; and to account for it with any thing like reason is impossible. Several circumstances, however, concur to produce this anomaly. And first, our short-sightedness. Our eyes seem strained when we look beyond present objects and enjoyments; we are unable to fix them for any lengthened period upon futurity; we see what is around us in the world, but we see not, or very obscurely, even with the light the Scriptures afford, distant realities, however glorious. And then our depravity confines our thoughts and desires to the vanities of time. As fallen creatures, we have no taste for the sublime pleasures which infinitely transcend those of earth,

and, therefore, worldly concerns alone interest, and upon them the dependence and the hope are solely placed for gratification and comfort. To forget that there is another state of being is frequently the aim of mankind, and if it be kept in view at all, a reversionary interest in the heavenly felicity, when every thing here fails, is that which induces a thought concerning it, and not delight in the joys that surround the throne of the Eternal.

Thus men are contented to play with earth's baubles; and when disappointment succeeds to hope, some other toy supplies the place of the former, till its fallaciousness also is proved. And so man's earthly career is spent in grasping at shadows, and grieving to find them unsubstantial, unsatisfying, and evanescent.

This life cannot yield sufficient happiness for an immortal soul, inasmuch as its utmost bound is but as nothing in comparison with the infinitely lengthened term of an eternal existence. The world's good is but a pittance when enjoyment must be found for endless years, or these years spent in the lack of it. It is mockery to desire a man to live eternally upon the sustenance of a day! If we secure not something more lasting than earth's best

gifts, we must shortly be deprived of all on which our hearts are set.

That the world is delusive and ensnaring, it is our endeavour, in the following pages, to prove. That no solid joy can accrue from its vain show and idle pageantry, we believe all who possess them will, as with one voice, testify. The pleasures of earth allure in anticipation, but they seldom deceive in possession. Take but a full draught of worldly enjoyments, and the intoxication ceases; and if wedded to the world still, it is because true joy is unknown.

Wherein real blessedness consists, and the way in which it may be attained, it is likewise our desire to point out. And should we have the unspeakable comfort of being instrumental, through the divine blessing, in opening the eyes of one worldly character, to see the futility of his hopes, —to perceive that he is building on the sand, and that his pleasures perish in the using,—the value of such a discovery will be inestimably precious. The soul that ceases to cleave to earth, is taught of God to seek imperishable riches,—"a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." And they

that seek the joys that are at God's right hand, have the unfailing promise, that they shall find them. The water of life is free to all, and *its*, draught satisfies.

And never let it be forgotten, that if we secure immortal blessedness, we shall have true enjoyment in the world besides; but if we lose heaven's joy, we *can* possess no other that is worth the coveting. Thus *real* is inseparable from *everlasting* happiness. Joy is never dealt out by halves; it is all, or none. If we accept of it, we shall have the full portion that never ends; if we reject it, not one particle of *pure* bliss can even here be ours.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DANGER FROM THE WORLD.

Page

Different meanings of the Phrase, "the World,"—In Scripture used to denote those who are opposed to godliness—The world and real Christians opposed in thought, in action—Dispositions and actions of the worldly various—Impossibility of avoiding converse with the world—Danger from it—Christian's conduct towards the worldly, . . 13

CHAPTER II.

WORLDLINESS IN PRACTICE.

In what instances believers may be seduced to conform to worldly practices—Christians not inclined to flagrant sin—Danger of conformity in desire of applause—Fashion—Expense—Spending of time—Gaieties—Love of the world incompatible wtth Christianity 23

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

The Sabbath misspent—Blessedness of the Institution—Manner in which the worldly spend it—Objection answered—Christians hail the return of the Sabbath—Topics that on that day pass under their review—Other duties of it—Connection between the Sabbath and the week—Rest in God—Temptations through intercourse with the world—Prayer recommended, ... 40

CHAPTER IV.

RELIGION OF THE WORLDLY CONTRASTED WITH THE TRUE.

Page.

World's religion without reference to the Bible—Consists in cold, uninfluential ceremony—Wordly ideas of morality—Selfishness—Perversions of religion—What it really is; deeply seated in the heart; eminently conspicuous; unlimited in its influence—Religion of worldly confined—The true, universal in its effects—Searching questions—Why wonders of redemption wrought, ... 58

CHAPTER V.

THE YOUNG SHOWN WHERE TO FIND HAPPINESS.

Ignorance of religion often in the well inclined among the young—They conceive of it as enthusiasm—To think thus not blameless—Youth attractive—The young addressed—Lord Chesterfield's testimony to the vanity of the world—Extract of a letter to him from Voltaire—That religion is gloomy, contradicted by fact—Clementine Cuvier: Hannah Sinclair—Striking contrast between the happiness expressed by the religious, and the lack of it in the worldly—The young earnestly pled with, . 75

CHAPTER VI.

THE WAY OF SALVATION.

What is essential to salvation clearly revealed—Difficulties where there need be none—A sense of helplessness necessary—A sense of sin very encouraging—Receiving Christ—Salvation finished—For whom? those who desire it in whole—Believer discouraged by defect in sanctification—Address to the careless—Delay dangerous—Warfare commences with spiritual life, ... 93

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE.

Page.

Mankind by nature in a state of warfare with God—Christian's warfare is with Satan—Strife with evil not natural to man—Actions of unregenerated, evil—Characteristics of Christian's warfare:—Much in earnest; deep humility; of an exterminating quality—Certainty of the result—Are we engaged in this warfare?—Christian's should use their weapons—Redemption irrespective of any thing in us—This warfare shall cease, ... 111

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE OF HOLINESS.

Christian's warfare shall end in peace—Change in believers more or less rapid—Their love of holiness—attributes of God incomprehensible; love, light, holiness, life, eternal existence—Infinitude of God's excellencies—Christian's delight in God—Holiness and happiness inseparable—The desire of holiness given in order to its gratification—Holiness progressive—Do *we* feel that holiness and happiness are inseparable?—How are we affected towards its infinitude?—Heaven's bliss inconceivable, ... 128

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPACITY TO TASTE JOY.

Chief distinction between the worldly and religious—The soul must be formed for happiness ere it can receive it—Joy in God alone satisfying—Men of the world incapacitated to taste joy—This incapacity tends to, and is a capacity for, misery—consolatory thought to believers—Capacity for joy may be given where, for a time, little joy is experienced—This state seldom of long continuance—Christians should exert their capacity to taste joy—Affecting state of those who are destitute of it—It should be sought—Essential requisite of true joy, ... 145

CHAPTER X.

CHRISTIAN GRACES GIVEN TO BE USED.

Page.

All God's works manifestly with design—Design in the formation of the new man in Christ Jesus—Diligently to employ their talents, pressed upon Christians—Such as love, trust, abasement, ability to pray, to praise, to endure, to labour, to fight—By nature destitute of them all—Gift of Holy Spirit unspeakably valuable, and given to be exhibited to the praise of God's grace, ... 161

CHAPTER XI.

THE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.

Natives of different worlds—Trials of Christians in this world, as citizens of heaven: accounted fools or madmen; small number of their countrymen; dread of contamination—These trials prove their decent—Consolatory to know that their heavenly origin must remain—Impossible altogether to efface the identity of countrymen—The Spirit's seal equally uneffaceable—Inquietudes in the way to heaven may well be borne—Evidence of citizenship in love of countrymen. . . . 179

CHAPTER XII.

GROVELLING NATURE OF WORLDLINESS.

The people of God and the worldly may know to which class they belong—The worldly addressed—Reason and immortality distinguish man from the brute creation—Both profitless to the worldly—Infinite weight of eternity—Not from reason that a change in man can be anticipated—Christianity restores man to his primeval dignity—That we prize our immortality a test to judge of our state—The world placed in the balance against eternal joy and present peace, ... 195

THE WORLD'S RELIGION.

THE WORLD'S RELIGION, &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DANGER FROM THE WORLD.

Different meanings of the phrase, The World—In Scripture used to denote those who are opposed to godliness—The world and real Christians opposed in thought, in action—Dispositions and actions of the worldly various—Impossibility of avoiding converse with the world—Danger from it—Christians' conduct towards the worldly.

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good!
Almighty! thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then,
Unspeakable! who sitt'st above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these, thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and pow'r divine."

The world, in the literal acceptation of the term, signifies the globe on which we dwell; that spheric mass, composed of minerals and vegetables, which in our planetary system revolves round our sun, and in which God has placed his creature, Man. This residence, in which it is the good pleasure of the Deity that we should sojourn, is in every respect fitted to attract our reverential attention, and to call forth our love. The wonders and beauties that surround us, bearing, as they do, in legible characters, the impress of the hand which formed

them, demand the regard and the research of rational and intelligent beings.

With what incomparable grandeur and elegance is our world adorned! Whether we ascend heights lofty as the Andes, or stoop to examine the tints which, in countless number and variegated hue, enliven the turf, or spring from the soil,—whether we view the flame which majestically rises from Vesuvius or Etna, or the blade which we tread beneath our footsteps,—whether we behold the magnificence of the ocean's roll, or the beauteous painting with which the tulip and the butterfly are arrayed, wonders far beyond created power to frame, transfix the gaze and charm the senses! There is not a plant that lives unobserved in the desert, there is not a floweret that blooms unheeded in the vale, which wears not the stamp of the Great Creator's workmanship, and is not meet to exhibit His glory! The garden and the forest, the stately oak and the delicate snow drop, ice-clad regions and the burning plains of Hindoostan, all, all unite with universal voice in proclaiming, "the hand that made us is divine."

The world, in this sense, therefore, is eminently calculated to excite our interest, and claim our admiration. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works," said the Psalmist, "in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." And every child of God views with peculiar delight the

splendid fabric of the creation, knowing that it emanated from his best friend, and unwearied benefactor. We naturally prize the workmanship of one who is dear to us; and if in itself it is beautiful or estimable, we are proud to avow that he whom we value made it. And shall not the Christian, who is related to the Almighty by a tie nearer and closer than any that is earthly, glory in the wonderful works of his covenant God, and with filial regard and humble gratitude,

> "Lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
> And smiling say, My Father made them all.
> Are they not his by a peculiar right,
> And by an emphasis of int'rest his,
> Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
> Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
> With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
> That plann'd, and built, and still upholds a world
> So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?"

There are, however, other meanings distinct from that of the earth which we inhabit, that are attached to the phrase, *the world*, and which, from general usage, have become familiar to us. It is frequently employed to designate a portion of mankind. Thus we hear of the world of taste, the world of fashion, the literary world, or other similar appellations, which are intended to denote a part or division of the human race. Or men of the world are spoken of, by which is intended that class of persons who are most conversant with general customs and practices. Or the expression, the opinions of the world, is used to signify those sen-

timents and ideas that are received and adopted by the majority who take a lead in its concerns. We likewise hear of the Christian world, and *the world*, as opposed to what is peculiarly Christian. In the latter sense, we find the expression adopted by Christ himself. "I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me. The world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even even as I am not of the world."* "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."† In this meaning of the term, the world has ever been the source of temptation and trial to the children of God; and it is in this sense that the apostle John warns the Christian converts not to "love the world, neither the things that are in the world."‡

From these texts of Scripture, and others of similar import, it is evident, that there is something inimical to the life of godliness in holding much intercourse with the larger proportion of men, or according to the phrase in general use, the world. Every Christian feels, that to be much in the society of worldly characters is an impediment to his religious progress, and those who are necessitated to be so are frequently more or less injured by it. There is a contrariety in the desires and sentiments which prevail in the heart of the world-

* John xvii. 9–14. † John xv. 18. ‡ 1 John ii. 15.

ly professor, to those principles and affections that religion enjoins, which leads to the result we would deprecate. And a deadening and destructive influence on that new life which believers inherit, is consequent on associating much with the people in whom this dissimilarity exists.

It may scarcely be necessary to observe, that real Christians, and the world, as opposed to them in principle, live in a totally different range of thought; the one having their expectations of happiness chiefly placed in a future state, the other as having little hope beyond the present scene. The enjoyments of worldlings end with life; they have no realizing apprehension of aught that is to follow, when death has done its office. Their minds scarcely ever contemplate the prospect when the things of time shall cease. They give themselves no concern to solve the all-important questions,—"What shall be my fate when I am no longer the inhabitant of this earth? Is the soul immortal? and, Where shall it exist *for ever?*" To watch what may escape from them in conversation regarding futurity, one might be inclined to imagine, that they considered it of no consequence whether there is another state of existence, or whether they shall perish with the brutes; for all their desires relate to time and its vanities. Talk to them of the happiness of heaven, and it will be very evident that they can conceive of no pleasure *there*,

for it is with marked impatience that they can be brought to listen to such a theme, which they visibly show, in their apprehension, carries gloom along with it. And even when sick or dying, and thus incapacitated for relishing earth's best gifts, tell them that joys which never end are offered to their acceptance, and the listless, apathetic look, and apparent distaste for the subject, betray the truth that they conceive not of joy beyond the grave.

How exceedingly different are their emotions when any piece of intelligence relating to worldly prosperity is communicated to them! Inform them that they have succeeded to an estate,—that they have been successful in a speculation,—that their children are likely to be prosperously settled in life,—or even give them hopes of such earthly good, and it will be easy to discern, that in their view, happiness must ensue from the possession of these things. Their desires centre in the world, and from it alone they expect profit or pleasure. Nay, to take the extreme case before mentioned, on a deathbed, when it might be supposed the vanity of all that is terrestrial would become evident, information on worldly concerns seems more to affect and interest them, than the near approach of that unchangeable state to which they are hastening! It appears as if, in their estimation, there is reality in present things, something certain, and within their grasp; whereas that which is spoken of the joys

of heaven, is by them conceived to be illusive and visionary, a blessedness of which they have no idea, for which they are not prepared, and do not entertain a wish.

Completely the reverse of such sentiments are those, which, by the spirit of God, are imparted to the believer in Jesus. His highest good is not sought for among the perishable contingencies of time. He never can repose on joy so fleeting. Earth's gifts do, indeed, call forth his unfeigned gratitude to Him who bestows them, and often they promote his pleasure and comfort; but he cannot, and he would not, rest on that which is not calculated to impart lasting peace. *Rest*, did we say? The gifts of earth are here to-day and gone to-morrow. There is no stability in the prop they afford; while we lean upon them they fail! And neither is there satisfaction to be found in the world's good; for an abundant measure of it we might possess, and still remain miserable; or happy, we might be, although deprived of it all! The Christian, therefore, seeks a treasure that is durable, secure, abiding, satisfying. Hoping for, and receiving that blessedness which it is only in the power of the Deity to confer, he sits loose to the trifles of a day. God is his portion, "of all his gifts Himself the crown;" and in Him the believer inherits, through sovereign grace, fulness of unending joy.

The distinction between the child of God and the worldly professor, is not, however, merely confined to thought, but leads to a totally different line of conduct. In every description of worldly characters, we see all that they do has reference to present things; to make the most of the world, being naturally the first consideration with the individuals who only expect enjoyment from it. And, according to the diversified inclinations and tastes of the world's votaries, will be their manner of life.

The dispositions of this division of mankind are quite as various as those of any other class; what is pleasure to one, being much the reverse to another. The amassing of riches is the delight of some worldlings, to attain which object any sacrifice seems desirable. They will "rise early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrow," if by any means they can add to their store, and increase that for which they have in fact no use, nor any intention of using. And the prodigal expending of wealth in luxury or amusement—possibly in vice—appears to constitute the happiness of others, who, with equally little reason, can place their enjoyment in what is ruinous to their *temporal* interests, and take pleasure in what necessarily leads to misery, even here. There are some with whom fame is the chief good coveted,—that capricious breath, which, little worth, "reports a truth or pub-

lishes a lie." To procure this bauble, toil seems easy and labour sweet. With how much cost of health and of self-denying effort, is reputation often sought in ways exceedingly diversified, and in gradations rising from the wild effusions of the mountebank orator, to the patient research of the man of science, or the course of the statesman and the warrior.—But there are to be found among the worldly, some of an amiable temper of mind, with whom the applause of their fellow-men is not the first consideration. These commonly look for satisfaction in their families, and in the domestic circle. To them, what is connected with their private affairs or near relatives, is their first, their only thought, and on such concerns they bestow their time and their hopes. In so far as this line of conduct conduces to the well-being of others or themselves, without being injurious to those around them, it is commendable; but there is one great defect in these characters,—*God is forgotten.* They live for the world; it is something earthly alone which they prize, and for this they labour.

Thus, whatever it may be, it is the world, in some shape, that the worldly covet, and their anticipations of happiness from it lead to the conduct they pursue. They will toil with infinite assiduity, and submit to any deprivation, to acquire the short-lived earthly good to which their propensities tend. From the cradle to the grave they seem insensible

to the value of any part of their existence, except that which they are to spend as mortals, and they cling to life as that on which their hopes termi nate.

Now, these are the individuals with whom the Christian must associate. It is no matter of choice whether or not he shall dwell with them,—they are around him in every rank and sphere,—they are to be found in every circle, and to avoid holding converse with them is impossible. They are justly termed the World, for we must leave *it*, would we leave *them*.

It becomes, therefore, matter of serious consideration to the renewed in heart, how they ought to conduct themselves towards the people of the world, and in how far it is their duty to conform to its customs and practices.

There is undoubtedly danger when much in the society of such persons, that the believer's natural, grovelling, earthly propensities may revive. We have an ally in our own breasts ready to confederate with the world, and prone to take delight in its enjoyments. And, although the Christian's affections are fixed, without the possibility of final change, on heaven, and heaven's Lord, and are not to be satisfied with the toys of sense, yet, where those with whom he associates are engrossed by earth's vanities, there is something infectious in the spirit, and the impression may be lessened that

his "life is hid with Christ in God." Say, believing soul, have you not felt it so? Having been much with worldly men, can you, with the same fervency of spirit, delight yourself with God; and can you, with equal earnestness, desire communion with him? And even in the retirement of the closet, does not the effect of the society you have left follow you, deadening the heart to religion, and withering the lively perception of its blessedness? Yes, it is thus. Association with characters so little congenial, tends to foster luke-warmness in devotion, and all its fatal consequences.

But, if to associate with the worldly be unavoidable, (and perhaps entirely to shun this society may not consist with the Christian's duty,) the line of conduct which he pursues respecting them, must be of the utmost importance, so as on the one hand to avoid needless singularity; and on the other, to escape the hurtful effects that would ensue from a too ready compliance with practices, the tendency of which is to injure the life of Godliness.

There is much that may verge towards a compliance with worldly maxims and usages, for which many specious inducements are held out. With an appearance of truth it may be argued, that thus we shall throw no unnecessary gloom over the religion we profess, but shall exhibit it in a more inviting form; and, it may be, disrobe it in some

degree, of what, to the characters of whom we write, is repulsive and forbidding. Ah! no; believer in Jesus, the religion of the heart ever was, and ever will be, distasteful, uncongenial, hateful, to those who know it not. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."—But, again, it is urged, that if we cannot allure by concession in minor points, we, at least, avoid giving offence, and that in matters of trifling importance it is often a duty to yield. If, indeed, the matter be unimportant, concession may become a duty, remembering the Apostle's example, who "was made all things to all men, that he might gain some." But, let us ever bear in mind, that no transgression of the law of God is of little moment. On this the question hinges. What do the oracles of the Supreme dictate, compliance or the reverse?—Say not the matter is trifling; nothing is so which God ordains, or God forbids. This should be the ordeal by which to test whatever may seem doubtful. The path of duty becomes plain where Scripture is the guide.

But some genuine Christian may here be ready to say, that by concession he fervently hopes to be essentially useful to a dear friend or relative, who, it is the grief of his heart to know, is deeply prejudiced against the truth as it is in Jesus. Undoubtedly there is no case in which it is more requisite that the believer should walk circum-

spectly than this one, taking heed by meekness, kindness, and forbearance, to remove, if it be possible, the false impression that rests on the mind of him he would benefit. But we would entreat him to recollect, that there is a line of separation which must be passed, ere he and a character so opposite, can assimilate. One or the other must yield; and by yielding, Christian, you at least tacitly avow that your side is the weakest, and that your sentiments are of the least importance. And, can you be content that any with whom you are connected, or who are dear to you, should think thus of the minutest part of your religious practice? In ordinary concerns, do we find the more probable way to incline others to follow our example in any mode of life, is to abandon that line of conduct *ourselves?* No; it has become proverbial that "example goes further than precept," and perseverance in what we do is absolutely necessary, would we wish to influence the actions of those around us. Believe it, Christian, it is decision, not compromise, that is the method most likely to awaken, and to win the unconverted soul. When those whom you anxiously desire to profit, see you firm, consistent, unbending, where the law of God is concerned, they will be persuaded that you believe what you say, when you act in conformity to your profession; and this persuasion will do more to arouse them from their dream of security, and

to incline them to consideration and inquiry, than any other means which it is in your power to adopt.

Examine, then, diligently, and deeply weigh the momentous consideration, What is, and what is not, at variance with your religious principles? And having ascertained that the religion of Christ inculcates any duty however generally neglected, or forbids any practice however universally fol lowed, hesitate not implicitly to obey its require ments, nor swerve an iota from the straight line, were the *only* end you had in view *to benefit your brethren of mankind.*

Conversion is, indeed, the work of God, but it is frequently effected by probable means, and often by means of the persevering endeavours and earnest prayers of His children. Yet never can they hope for the agency of the blessed Spirit to crown their efforts with success, if they are accompanied by a departure, however minute, from the precepts the Scriptures enjoin. The smallest transgression of the law is sin; and sin cannot be the instrument God employs as the medium of leading the unconcerned to the Saviour. Yield, believer, to the wishes of those you would benefit in any thing, in *every* thing, excepting where the injunctions of Christ are contrary. Regarding these, let your practice be stable as the foundation from whence it flows "The law of the Lord altereth not:" it

is established on this unchangeable basis, the holiness of Jehovah. It is your joy, Christian, to believe in its stability, and to perform its requirements; and let your heart exult in the assurance, that at all times, and in every possible condition, to obey this law is no less your duty than your interest, and can in no circumstance or relation of life in which you may be placed, be otherwise

CHAPTER II.

WORLDLINESS IN PRACTICE

In what instances believers may be seduced to conform to worldly practices—Christians not inclined to flagrant sin—Danger of conformity in desire of applause—Fashion—Expense—Spending of time—Gaieties—Love of the world incompatible with Christianity.

"For on earth
Who against faith and conscience can be heard
Infallible? Yet many will presume."

It may be useful to investigate more minutely the subject that has been discussed in the preceding chapter, to bring it home to ourselves, and to examine, in the daily occurrences of life, in what particular instances true Christians are more especially tempted to conform to the customs and usages which prevail among the worldly.

Before doing so we may remark, that believers are not inclined to the commission of any flagrant transgression of God's law. There is an opposition in the heart that is renewed by His Spirit, to all that is "earthly, sensual, devilish." We are told by an apostle, that those who have obtained the precious faith of the Gospel, are by it made

partakers of a divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* The flesh does indeed lust against the Spirit, but the Spirit likewise lusteth against the flesh, and is contrary to it. With the new birth there is a repugnance implanted to all evil. What is offensive to God is odious to him in whom faith dwells. And to commit sin is not the natural bent of that new life which Christ imparts, the desires and affections of which are decidedly and directly opposed to it.

Therefore, in adverting to the risk there exists of a believer in Jesus adopting the practices of worldly professors, it should be distinctly understood, that notorious sin is not that against which we here desire especially to warn him. If he is betrayed, through the remainder of corruption which lurks in his breast, into open transgression of God's law, it must be the source of unfeigned grief to his soul, and can never be unknown to him. Whereas the dereliction of duty to which we refer, is of the character alluded to by the Prophet Hosea, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not."† It is something blameworthy, that may be practised unthinkingly,—is often an almost imperceptible leaning towards what is amiss. It may be done from the desire or mis-

*2 Peter i. 4. †Hosea vii. 9.

taken intention of doing *right*, and is scarcely ever fairly and openly admitted by the Christian himself to be wrong. Were he, as in the sight of God, to sift the matter impartially, conviction of the truth could not fail to be the result; but this he does not, deeming the subject, in all likelihood, unimportant, and thus he errs, where, possibly, he is not aware of being defective, and, it may be, least suspects it.

In what especial instances, then, is a wakeful attention and jealous guard incumbent on the Christian, would he exhibit the life of godliness in all its purity, uncontaminated not merely by open sin, but by the practices and maxims which abound in the world, and which are indispensable if we examine them by the religion of Christ!

There is an universal characteristic among the worldly, which is contagious in its nature, and very detrimental to the life of godliness,—we allude to the desire of human applause and distinction. The false estimate they entertain of earthly things, in making them their chief good, induces the attempt, which is so general among such persons, by some means to be distinguished and admired. This wish to rise above their compeers may be detected in every sphere and degree; and although, according to the line in life, its effects may be seen somewhat different, the ambition, in the highest and the lowest rank, to eclipse others, is the same. Why are princes courted, and why is the company of

the great and the noble so frequently sought? It is not that there is any love inherent in man for those of exalted rank and quality, or that there is any desire natural to us to do them service; but it is that the inferior, as satellites, may revolve around and shine with them. To what can we ascribe the eagerness for display that pervades all circles in worldly society; the splendour with which the houses, the tables, the equipages, and the persons of the great are adorned; and the equally solicitous attempt to copy, in their measure, that to which they cannot attain, which the subordinate exhibit? We can alone trace this turn of mind, which is so common among men, to the desire of being thus honoured and distinguished. And where is the class in which there are not some who have *attained* this fancied superiority? who lord it over others, and to whom the right, as matter of course, is ceded? In every little circle there are the *great men*, and the aspiring group who imitate them,—those who lead, and those who follow.

How important is the sentence which the auditors of fashion award to the most successful candidate for their favour! How arbitrary is their decision! to which the worldly, in every station of life, bow. For fashion is not confined to the frivolous order, who exclusively claim to rank within its limits; it embraces a wide range, and adapts its laws to each grade, and to all denominations of men.

And what is fashion? A vapour, a whim, which has no more solid foundation than the bubbles that rise but to break. It is, without an assignable reason, that which pleases some to adopt; and, without any rational motive, what others must therefore copy. Yet this phantom is the idol the world worships, and the desire of distinction is that which prompts to the follies,—may they not often merit a harsher term?—for which fashion is frequently made the pretext. And the wish for the envious regard of the many, or, it may be, of the select few whose notice is considered worth the engaging, more than any other cause, conduces to form the characters of whom we write

And is there no hazard, Christian, that in the society of such persons, you will imbibe somewhat of their spirit? Is there no latent desire ever to be detected in your bosom for distinction, for display, for the pleasures and the follies of the world? No tinder which is ready to kindle when the flame is near? No predisposition to catch the malady with which others are infected, that may render the tainted atmosphere the more dangerous? Would to God it were not so!—that at all times, and in every circumstance, the believing soul could rise superior to what is earthly; breathe, as it were, purer air; feel as on the confines of a nobler state of existence; and next to inhabit celestial regions! But all who have known the power of godliness

will sorrowfully confess, that however much this may be their desire, that however at favoured moments it may be their attainment, yet the world is a snare and a stumbling-block in their path, that when necessitated to mix in its society, their inability is increased to "do the things that they would."

It is necessary, however, to be more specific, and to explain the worldly practices to which we allude, and against which we would guard our Christian brethren. Is that, then, never *expended* by the believer in Jesus, in worldly gratifications, which might have been devoted to the glory of his Redeemer, and to benefit mankind? And is he careful to redeem from superfluous indulgences, what might be appropriated to purposes so valuable? We mean not that those blessings which his heavenly Father has given him, consequent, perhaps, on the sphere in which he is placed, should by him be relinquished, and not received with thankfulness. This would be to reverse the order of things, and the intention of Providence, and cannot be a duty incumbent on any one. There is, however, little need for warning here; for, with scarcely an exception, all are disposed to accept and to use the bounties God has bestowed upon them. But we allude to the usual concomitants of a worldly spirit; the decoration, the splendour, the pride of life, in which the rich of this class indulge,

and for which the poorer classes among them strive. Every man, without difficulty, may judge for himself, whether an ambition to shine is productive in him of an elegance of embellishment, which, if not greater than his circumstances may warrant, is at least greater than religion permits. Cannot we discriminate between that which our heavenly Father designs we should enjoy, and those extravagancies which are only calculated to attract the gaze and the envy of our fellow-men? Cannot we distinguish between what is reasonable in itself, and essential to our comfort, and what bears the stamp of earth's gaudy show, and the glitter of the world's parade? He that would lead a life of holiness must not allow the suspicion, however groundless, to be attached to him, that he seeks by vainglorious display the admiring glance of the multitude. His whole demeanour should evidence, that the pomps and vanities of life have, in his view, lost their power to charm; and a doubt should never be allowed to arise in the breast of an individual, that the Christian's heart and treasure are in heaven. And there in truth they are. The mind of a believer is not constituted like that of the mere worldly professor; and if he is led inadvertently to adopt what others practise, on calm reflection his better judgment regards the folly in its just light, and his genuine inclinations renounce the world in whatever shape its temptations may allure.

Yes, the new nature which he has received from God, maintains the ascendency in him over all that is earthly, and proof shall not be wanting, in his general conduct, that the world is a vanquished foe.

The manner in which time is spent is another form in which the practices of the worldly are ready to delude. Time is a talent bestowed upon us for very valuable purposes. It is short-lived and fleeting. We are commanded to redeem it. A few, a very few, days or years are given us, that we may improve them for the benefit of our fellow-men while here, and that we may prepare for that better country, to participate in the joys of which the Christian is formed. The worldly make no account of the invaluable boon, unless as it is the medium of increasing their wealth, or of affording them enjoyment by the various methods in which they take delight. No thought of responsibility ever occurs to them for the way in which their time is spent,—no thought of the consequences of mis-pending it ever obtrudes. If there is nothing absolutely wicked in what they do, in their opinion all is well. Thus, hour after hour is frittered away in what is useless, at least, as it respects eternity; and when time with them shall cease, there will be no portion of it to which they can refer, as the period when God was sought and heaven won.

A believer in Jesus, it is true, cannot, in these

respects, resemble the worldly; and yet even he may learn, from example, a careless, trifling frame, which would seem little to appreciate the value of his flying years. He may do something, and yet much less than he might, for the cause of God, the interests of his own soul, and the souls of others. He, too, may seemingly forget that responsibility attaches to him for the manner in which his days are passed, and, for a period at least, it may require a nice discernment to distinguish, in this point, between the disciple of Christ and the ungodly. May not a believer be tempted to prolong seasons of amusement, in themselves perhaps innocent, till the waste of time renders them *guilty?* Nay, farther may he not be tempted, by intercourse with the worldly, to join in amusements which are undoubtedly hurtful, and of which, on considering the subject he would decidedly disapprove? There are entertainments in which it is difficult to convince the worldly (to use their own phrase,) there can be any harm. They will attend them nearly at each successive return of the hours usually devoted to repose, thus turning night into day, and often impairing their health and sinking their spirit, and yet inquire wherein is the harm? We have been amusingly asked, did the evil of evening entertainments consist in the *lights?* But let such characters become seriously impressed with religion, and they will soon detect where the harm lies.

They will then learn to prize time as a precious gift, and they will experience, that to redeem it is impossible, if the night be devoted to folly, and perhaps half the day to sleep. Were there no other reason that could be advanced, to prove that the gaieties of life are indefensible on Christian principles than the waste of time, this alone were sufficient.

But there is a stronger motive to deter a child of God from joining in the midnight assembly,—the incompatibility of such practices with devotion. The attempt need only be made, and conviction must ensue, that to raise the heart to the Divine Being, in prayer or praise, shortly before, or soon after mixing with the giddy throng, is scarcely possible; that the Word of Inspiration, if then read, becomes like a sealed book; that at such a time its lessons cease to instruct, and its promises to comfort. And thus the devotional duties of the evening and of the morning become, if performed at all, but lip service, and the soul is defrauded of its spiritual meals.

And can the Christian consent to this? Will he compound to possess the world's pleasures, and to lose those for which he is athirst? It cannot be. He that knows the joy of communion with God, feels that emptiness is inscribed on earth's gay scenes,—that even were they not detrimental to him, they are tasteless and worthless. But he

likewise experiences that, yielding no satisfaction in themselves, they rob him of the pure delights which satisfy; that they give him nothing and take all; that, falsely called pleasure, they deprive him of its reality.

It has, however, been observed, that the Christian may be so circumstanced, as to be induced to join in such circles, or that he may do so from inconsideration. We should be sorry to denounce all as unbelievers who are to be found in the world's gay assemblies. Very differently situated are the disciples of Christ, and of the trials to which a portion of them are exposed, the rest, possibly, have no conception. The manner in which they have been educated, may lead some believers to view such scenes in a more favorable light, and to conceive of them as innocent; and necessity may oblige others to be much more in all sorts of worldly society than their inclinations dictate. Yet, let it be distinctly understood, that the *inclination* of the Christian can never go with him, if he joins in the gaieties of the world. In such fellowship a spiritual mind cannot take pleasure; and sooner or later the believer in Jesus will discover, that worldly society is the bane of his religion, and is destructive of his peace. Therefore he will shun that intercourse, if it is in his power to do so, which he finds is opposed to his eternal interests, and to his truest joy. Should any professing

Christian, into whose hands these pages may fall, feel in himself a wish to form excuses for a compliance with worldly practices, which he may without difficulty avoid, let him recollect that thus he shows decided symptoms of a worldly spirit, which is completely inimical to real religion. Let him examine, without delay, the grounds of his hope, and the sincerity of his profession, nor rest satisfied till it is evidenced, by the heavenliness of his desires, and his separation in *heart*, and, in his case, in conduct, from the world. And let him remember that it is written, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* These are the words of inspiration; therefore, however propensities to delight in the gaieties of time may be palliated before men, nothing can be more certain, than that equally with open sin, they mark a man unrenewed in the spirit of his mind, and unconverted to God.

* 1 John, ii. 15.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

The Sabbath misspent—Blessedness of the institution—Manner in which the Worldly spend it—Objection answered—Christians hail the return of the Sabbath—Topics that on that day pass under their review—Other duties of it—Connection between the Sabbath and the Week—Rest in God—Temptations through intercourse with the world—Prayer recommended.

"It is not only in the sacred fane
That homage should be paid to the Most High,—
There is a temple, one not made with hands,
The vaulted firmament: Far in the woods
Almost beyond the sound of city chime,
At intervals, heard through the breezeless air,
When not the limberest leaf is seen to move,
Save where the linnet lights upon the spray;
Where not a flow'ret bends its little stalk,
Save where the bee alights upon the bloom;
There wrapt in gratitude, in joy, and love,
The man of God will pass the Sabbath noon;
Silence his praise: his disembodied thoughts,
Loos'd from the load of words, will high ascend
Beyond the empyreal."

In noticing how time is lavished by the worldly, it would be unpardonable to omit a portion of it which they uniformly misspend, in direct opposition to the revealed will of God,—we allude to the manner in which they pass the Sabbath. A seventh part of our time, the Great Lawgiver has apportioned to himself; in it we are commanded

to rest from worldly employments and amusements; and the worship of God, and making preparation for eternity, we are informed, is to constitute its peculiar business. Were this law arbitrary, and could we discern no reason for its promulgation but God so wills it, still, as the creatures of his hand, we should be bound to obedience. But, truly, "the Sabbath was made for man;" our interest and our duty were never more closely united than in the keeping of this divine law. It is ordained to gild our earthly pilgrimage with a few rays of celestial light. It is that day in which God designs, and has pledged himself to bestow his best gifts on mankind. In every season, and at all times, he gives grace and glory, and withholds no good thing from them who walk uprightly: but on this day, he profusely scatters blessedness; and redemption with all its fruits, and heaven with all its joys, are, on it, pressed upon our acceptance. And whether in the closet, or in the sanctuary, His believing people can unite their testimony, that God "blessed the Sabbath day."

And how is this part of their time generally spent by worldly men? There are some of this character who make no pretense to religion, who pay no attention to its sacred rites, and who profess themselves regardless of its services. These persons make it sufficiently plain, that they are not the followers of Christ. They declare as em-

phatically as if they uttered it in words, that they will not reverence the Sabbath-day. In them the Christian cannot be deceived, and, therefore, from their example there is the less danger.

But there are others, who avow themselves disposed to serve God, and to respect the institutions of the gospel, yet whose religion is confined to a few external acts, the principal of which is the attendance on public worship during some part of the Sabbath. By their conduct we should be inclined to imagine, that they conceived the fourth commandment enjoined little else than once or twice, on the return of the sacred day, to meet together in the house of prayer, so completely are its remaining hours robbed of their sanctity. Were the full extent of the injunction, to remember the *ordinances of religion* to keep them holy, they would outwardly act in conformity to it; this, however, seems all that they are disposed to allow the precept requires; and an entire day to be devoted to religious exercises is quite beyond their reckoning.

Perhaps we may be told that, in other respects, they observe the Sabbath-day. That on it their dependants do no laborious work. That on this day those occupations, of which the chief object is to amuse, are laid aside. That the song or the dance, they conceive to be incompatible with its requirements. That their instruments of music

are silent; and the chase, and the field, or the cards and the dice, are, on this day, not resorted to.

Happy it is for Britain, truly, that these and similar amusements and vanities, are frequently deemed, even by the worldly, incompatible with the design of the Sabbath! Happy is it for highly favoured Scotland, that *there*, in an especial manner, the line of distinction in outward decency of conduct between the Sabbath and the rest of the week, cannot be encroached upon with impunity! To our excellent legislature we are in part indebted for these proprieties; and partly to the influence of a religious principle, even where it does not exist in its genuine power, consequent on the full blaze of Christian light with which our land is blessed.

But, let us not be deceived by these fair appearances; with the exception already noticed, of the short time that public worship, or, it may be, the reading of some devotional treatise occupies, it is only by changing one worldly employment for another, that the greater proportion of this class observe the hallowed day. There are, in fact, privileged acts which are considered by them allowable, and not to be condemned as contrary to the spirit of the Sabbath. To these they gladly resort; and while visiting their friends, reading newspapers, writing letters, and many other unne-

cessary concerns, conceive that they are entitled to be exempted from all censure. From what authority it is deduced that these deeds are allowable, we are at a loss to determine.

There are, in some instances, nice shades of discrimination drawn between the Sabbath's lawful and forbidden occupations, according to the creed of this class of men. Vehicles of all descriptions, for instance, seem, as it were, *licensed* to be in constant requisition for *recreation* on the Sabbath in some circles, where, nevertheless, the same profanation of its sacred hours in the barge or the yacht, would not be deemed admissible. We are glad that a restriction exists in any case, but why it should be confined to the one more than to the other, remains to be explained. Or, to spend the Sabbath in secular business, is justly believed to be a dereliction of duty, by some worldly men, who do not, however, scruple to devote it to travelling or company, thereby depriving others, as well as themselves, of the benefits arising from its institution.

And here we may anticipate the reply that has so often been made to such animadversions: That it is impossible to devote the whole day to religion; and that, therefore, the commandment must be understood with limitation. True it is, that creatures depraved in heart, and prone to evil, cannot keep this, or any other divine law perfectly;

and, having done our best, we are still unprofitable servants, and deficient and worthless is our obedience. How are our religious services defiled by distraction of thought, by worldliness of mind, by defectiveness in practice! Yet, there *is* a possibility of obeying this commandment in such a manner as God will in mercy accept; and, that the souls which he has formed, will thereby grow in assimilation to himself, and in meetness for that heavenly inheritence which awaits the children of his kingdom. There *is* such a thing as "not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words on this holy day, but calling the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable."

Thus the believing disciples of Jesus desire and aim to pass these hallowed hours; and amidst the failure which is inseparable from our fallen state, thus, by the grace of God, in some measure they do spend the sabbath-day. On it the ordinances of religion are by them observed, not as meritorious acts entitling them to the favour of the Most High, but as appointed means, which, when divinely blessed, enrich the soul with spiritual life. Far from conceiving of the Sabbath as burdensome, they hail its return as a privilege, knowing that it is designed to bring them nearer to their chief good. To seek after God is as natural to an awakened mind as it is for the weary to seek for repose, or

the famished for food. Like these, the Christian feels his necessity. How much to be desired, then, is that day, when he is more especially invited to obtain relief. On it other needful cares may warrantably be laid aside, and he rejoices to be justified in dropping earth's solicitudes for a time, and in looking more fixedly on his heavenly hopes, and yielding himself more unreservedly to heavenly employments.

Various are the topics which pass under his review in public and in private on the Sabbath-day, but one subject runs throughout, and is connected with them all, the incomprehensible greatness of redeeming love! United with this, he fears not to see the impurity with which his nature is stained, and the deformity of his best, his immortal part, for with the bane he beholds the antidote. United with this, the burden of sorrow is lessened; and through the darkest shades of his earthly pilgrimage light shines. United with this, death is robbed of its sting, and the grave of its victory. They are disarmed of power to hurt, and are transformed (thanks be to God) into blessings! Wondrous love. whence does it originate?—Not in the creature, for there is nothing in us to excite it. "All together are become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." But hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; let the sound vibrate from shore to shore, the love of Jehovah to his redeemed people origi-

nates *in Himself*. "I have loved thee with an *everlasting* love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."* "The mercy of the Lord is *from everlasting* to everlasting upon them that fear him."† "The Lord loved Israel *for ever*."‡ And if this marvellous love be by God bestowed on beings in whom there is nothing lovely, nothing to attract it, who shall hinder, what can change it? "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Wondrous love! what are thine effects?—They are infinite as their source,—where shall we limit them? On earth, the effects of divine love have been prominently seen in redemption. What but love *could* have induced the High and the Holy One, that inhabiteth eternity, to become man, to sojourn with sinners, and, by a life spent among wretched guilty worms, to prepare for them a robe of unspotted righteousness? What but love could have led Him, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," to consent to be forsaken of the Eternal, who was one with himself from everlasting, and to endure the unknown agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary for mortals? Irresistible is the apostle's conclusion, "*herein is love!*" But, is divine love exhausted here?—No; its breadth, and length, and depth, and height, are inexhaust-

* Jer. xxxi. 3. † Psal. ciii. 17. ‡ 1 Kings x. 9.

ible! Redemption, indeed, proves its extent, but stops not its current. It shall flow on uninterruptedly and eternally, beautifying and enriching the objects on whom it rests! How noble is the effect of divine love in the transformation of the human heart from sin to holiness! This effect is likewise seen on earth; but, O how conspicuously and gloriously shall it appear in heaven! This is a work worthy of the finger of God, and which God himself alone can produce: and it is certainly, and invariably, the proof of divine love. Is the soul deadened to the vanities of time, and alive to the infinite importance of things unseen and eternal; humbled on account of sin, and striving to fulfil the whole will of God; seeking to obtain salvation from the wrath to come through the blood of the everlasting covenant, and growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? no other evidence is necessary to prove, that upon this individual the love of God abides, for here the workmanship of God is visible. All created intelligences are unequal to the task of renewing a soul dead in trespasses and in sins; with God *only* this is possible. And where it is effected, even in the smallest degree, God hath wrought it, and they are the souls whom he loves, that he justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies, "according to the riches of his grace."

What the effects of the love of God shall ever-

lastingly be to his people, none can tell; but this we do know, that they must be immeasurably precious. When omnipotence and perfect wisdom unite to produce an effect, that which is thus produced, must be transcendently estimable. In this world when God works, either in nature or in grace, we discern the operation of his hands by the wisdom and the beauty with which his work is fashioned. And is our earth the only theatre where the attributes of the Eternal are displayed? Rather, is not what we have seen and known of God's wisdom, power, and love, but like the first fruits we have tasted, of what shall eternally be the source of our wonder, joy, and praise! "Blessed shall they be who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb:" yea, blessed, inexpressibly "blessed, is the nation whose God is the Lord."

How unspeakably valuable, then, is divine love! Oh! believer, prize it! God rests in his love;* rest thou in it likewise. Seek no other portion. Let God be your *all*, and your "exceeding great reward!"

It is to these, and such subjects, that the attention of the Christian is more especially directed on the Sabbath-day. And who will maintain that there is uselessness, that there is austerity, in the command thus to spend it? Who will say that it is

* Zeph. iii. 17.

not alike the source of consolation, as of improvement, to devote its hours to the acquisition of the knowledge of God and his holy will, to thanksgiving for invaluable privileges, and to preparation for eternal blessedness? There are other duties which properly belong to the Sabbath, such as the religious instruction of our families and dependants; and the endeavour to alleviate the sufferings of the sick and the sorrowful. But unless the day be dedicated to its peculiar work, it may almost be affirmed, that religion cannot exist in the soul, and that it will wither and die with the disuse of these sacred exercises.

How intimate is the connection between a Sabbath that has been spent in the immediate presence of God, and with an heart more than usually impressed by its solemn services, and the days that follow during the week! If the duties of the Sabbath be performed in a cold and formal manner, religious feeling does not speedily recover its tone. But if this hallowed day be devoutly observed, piety is strengthened and invigorated, and the effects are experienced by the Christian in augmenting his faith, in deepening his love, and in cherishing in his heart hope, and joy, and trust, and all the fruits of the Spirit.

What reason is there for gratitude to God that he instituted the Sabbath! Blessed day! The very name imports rest! And the nearer that we

approach to the end of its institution, the greater is the rest and peace its solemn hours afford. They are, when thus employed, more separate from the influence of earth's vanities, than the other portions of our time can be. The soul rises, is elevated above the sordid taint which so naturally cleaves to us. Heaven seems nearer and more to be desired,—the world less ensnaring, and more beneath our regard. The design of the Sabbath is to bring us to God, and when God is present, blessedness naturally follows. In Him the soul *can* rest, it cannot in aught besides. It feels, that having found the centre of attraction, no other need be sought, for satisfaction dwells there. It looks no higher, for higher it cannot look. What can the soul desire that infinite perfection cannot supply? In all other good there lacks something to complete the felicity—in the infinitude of the Eternal Jehovah, nothing.

Thus the rest of the Sabbath is not only a rest from worldly engagements and recreations, but it is a rest in God: a day devoted to the attainment of a more fixed reliance upon him as the joy and portion of the soul, and to acquiring a more implicit trust in all that he has promised, and a more unreserved satisfaction in all that he is, and ever shall be.

How false, then, is the allegation, that the Sabbath is burdensome,—that the Christian would

gladly relax from its rigour if he dare,—that if it were not for the penalty to be incurred, he would spend it as do others. On the contrary, knowing from experience that, when devoutly observed, it is frequently blessed as the means of increasing his graces, and of soothing his sorrows, it is that day, which, by the Christian, is more especially prized; and his deep regret only arises that the end of its institution is so inadequately answered by him. He would, if he could, spend it as an angel from heaven might be supposed to do, were he on earth; but in the keeping of this commandment, as in that of all others, defect and defilement pervade, and his hope for the acceptance of services so impure, rests on the righteousness and the atonement of his risen Lord.

Being persuaded, however, of the benefit and the blessedness resulting from the observance of the Sabbath, *can* the believer in Jesus be found guilty of neglecting to improve its hallowed hours for the important purposes for which it was instituted? Or *can* there be a risk here too, that the society of the worldly may prove detrimental? Let the disciples of Christ testify. Alas! they may—they too often do fail in the *entire* observation of the Sabbath as a day of spiritual rest; and association with worldly men is unhappily an impediment to the fulfilment, and a temptation to the careless performance of the devotional duties then required.

The open profanation of this day by the irreligious and the wicked, has, it is true, no other effect on the mind of a Christian than that of pity for their folly, and of sorrow for their crime. And there can be no temptation to a child of God to imitate what is so flagrant a violation of the divine command. But, to suppose an instance of frequent occurrence. In the family circle there may be many members who know not God, and who merely observe the Sabbath, as at the beginning of this chapter it has been described, by occasional, or even by stated attendance on public worship, with little else to mark it from the rest of the week. Yet, here there may be an individual, who not nominally, but in truth, is the disciple of Jesus, and whose sincere desire it is to fulfil the whole law of God, and to keep holy the Sabbath-day. Is there nothing to cool the fervency of his devotion, nothing to damp the life with which his religious duties might have been performed, from the circumstance that no sympathetic emotions are found in any one with whom he is more immediately connected, to strengthen what is weak, and to confirm what is heavenly? If alone and in retirement, this believer seeks and finds his God,—if in the house of prayer, his soul rises with Christ, and unseen realities seem present,—how are his feelings deadened, and how does his religion die, when he mixes with those among whom he dwells, whose perceptions

of divine truth are so little congenial, and whose conversation tends to obliterate every impression that had been produced on his mind, either in the closet or in the sanctuary?

When such an effect follows the Christian's intercourse with the worldly, energy fails. To will is, indeed, present with him, but how to *perform* is the difficulty. And the happy frame of mind he had enjoyed may be succeeded by an inaptitude to seek the exalted and ennobling pleasures of communion with Jehovah, and it is well if in no degree the believer's practice is likewise influenced by the example before him.

There is another instance, painful indeed to dwell upon, and yet true, where worldliness in others may be productive of much injury to that spirituality of feeling which the children of God earnestly desire to cultivate. Among those who minister in sacred things, some there are whose hearts are little in unison with their office. In these the fervour of devotion dwells not; their lips *alone* offer praise, and the cold, lifeless dissertations they deliver, fall upon the ear with paralysing effect. The Christian is not an exception to the general consequence of such an address; for although the truth *may* be preached, it will ever fail to interest. And even when what is enforced coincides with the dictates of inspiration, (which cannot always be affirmed,) and when the language

in which the discourse is clothed is glowing and well chosen, still, that which interests not the speaker, can never affect the hearers.

In this case, then, the house of prayer itself is that which deadens, and the offices of devotion that which tends to alienate from God; for worldliness may be *there* also, and its withering spirit may be infused into services the most sacred. And the heart that had ascended to God in private, may become lifeless and unimpressed, through the dull monotony of formal ministrations, that are calculated to freeze the genial warmth of religious feeling. Yet the injunction, "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is," remains in force. And to attend upon the ordinances of divine appointment, is a proof of obedience, even when the believer cannot hope to profit by them. Therefore, where more spiritual means are unattainable, through the circumstances in which he is placed, this duty will still not be neglected, remembering that "the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

Where intercourse with the worldly is unavoidable, yet, as it ever will be detrimental, one resource presents itself, a resource for every time of need, namely, prayer. Believing soul! that which you would remedy is God's work; from him, therefore, seek relief. To keep the heart alive to

the power of godliness, when necessitated to associate with those who are insensible to divine things, is not in man. But "God is able to make all grace abound towards you, to keep you from falling, and to succour them that are tempted." Or, believer! you desire that the worldly who are around you may "yield themselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead," and that they may live to his glory eternally. But the work of forming the soul to show forth His praise is creative; wherefore, pray. Man can do much.—He can invent and frame that which transports him through the pathless ocean; and although his bark "be driven of fierce winds, yet it is turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth, until it is brought unto the desired haven." He can form that which conveys him into ethereal regions, where, leaving his native residence, the earth, beneath him, the clouds become his pavilion. He can control fire and water, using them for his benefit, and by means of their power causing them efficiently to promote his advantage. He can bring under subjection animals the most savage, and the animate and inanimate creation, with which the world is stored, are subject to his dominion. These things, and many more, man can do; but one thing he cannot, and here his power fails; he has no ability to free the soul from sin, "to deliver from the power of darkness, and

to translate into the dominion of God's dear Son." Wherefore, Christian, if you desire this great work to be accomplished, *pray*. "He that made that which is without, made that which is within also;" and to be "*created* in Christ Jesus unto good works," requires as much the energy of the Almighty as our original formation out of nothing. True "wisdom is from above;" from thence, therefore, seek it. And let encouragement and comfort be derived from the consideration, that "we are insufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God."

CHAPTER IV.

RELIGION OF THE WORLDLY CONTRASTED WITH THE TRUE.

World's religion without reference to the Bible—Consists in cold, uninfluential ceremony—Worldly ideas of morality—Selfishness—Perversions of religion—What it really is; deeply seated in the heart; eminently conspicuous; and unlimited in its influence—Religion of the worldly confined—The true, universal in its effect—Searching questions—Why wonders of redemption wrought.

"What is fanatic frenzy, scorned so much
And dreaded more than a contagious touch?
I grant it dang'rous, and approve your fear,
That fire is catching if you draw too near;
But sage observers oft mistake the flame,
And give true piety that odious name.
To tremble, (as the creatures of an hour
Ought at the view of an Almighty power,)
Before His presence, at whose awful throne
All tremble, in all worlds, except your own.
To supplicate his mercy, love his ways,
To prize them above pleasure, wealth, or praise.
Though common sense allow'd a casting voice,
And, free from bias, must approve the choice,
Convicts a man fanatic in th' extreme,
And wild as madness in the world's esteem!"

From the observations that have been made in the preceding chapters, it is evident that the sentiments which prevail in the world are very different from what the Scriptures inculcate; and that the perceptions of such as "have tasted of the

heavenly gift, and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, living under the powers of the world to come," are not at all in unison with those of worldly professors. Nevertheless there are sentiments and ideas, respecting religion and morality, which the more decent and creditable of the latter class have formed for themselves, and which, with little variation, are very universally adopted by them all. These are entirely without reference to the Bible; nor can such persons be shaken in their opinions, by any thing in opposition to them, that may be advanced from sacred writ.

If a passage from that inspired volume, by which we all profess to be guided, that is completely at variance with their creed, be quoted in their hearing, it makes no impression on their minds. What is right, and what is wrong, is so settled to their satisfaction, that nothing appears to have the smallest weight in altering their notions or actions. Whence this theory of religion and morals is deduced, it would be difficult to determine; but it is generally received and understood by those of the worldly among whom propriety of conduct and regularity of life are found. So similar are their ideas on these points, that what they will say or do, in reference to them, may be known with equal certainty, as if a regular system had been promulgated. Should any with whom they are conversant fail of reaching their standard, they will meet

with their disapprobation; but should they exceed the limits they have drawn, and attain to a higher grade, they are sure of incurring their dislike. To be worse than themselves, they deem reprehensible; but to be better is, in their view, unpardonable.

Their religion seems to consist in a sort of reverential deportment towards the Deity, manifesting itself in a cold and formal respect for sacred institutions and things. Really to feel interested in what so nearly concerns us, as that happiness or misery *for ever* are impending, is by them deemed enthusiasm and folly; but still the round of respectful compliment must be paid with undeviating regularity. They will tell you, that far from neglecting any religious duty, they think it highly blameworthy to do so; but if mention is made of spending the Sabbath-day, as the genuine disciples of Jesus do, or of devoting even one hour to prayer, or to the perusal of the Word of Life, should they not avowedly confess that they condemn such practices, a look of disapprobation will at least follow. Often we are told, "that they do not approve of carrying religion too far,—that it is very right to be religious when it is kept within due bounds,—and that those who say most about it are not the most sincere." In short, their sentiments respecting this subject of paramount importance, as far as they can be inferred from their words and actions,

seem to be, that deference ought to be shown to religion in the aggregate; but in what it consists beyond the mere form, seems totally undefined by them. It is not, as they conceive, the heart raised to God; it is not the life guided by the precepts the Bible enjoins; it is not the dependence placed on a crucified Redeemer for salvation, and the conduct which naturally flows from such a reliance; it is not communion with God in prayer and praise; but it is a dull, formal, uninfluential return of careless ceremony, without the design that it should be productive of any result, excepting the satisfaction that arises from the recollection, that what is burdensome has been gone through, and that, therefore, more liberty to enjoy themselves according to their inclinations may now safely be taken.

Their ideas respecting morality are equally vague and undefined. They will tell you that it consists in being good members of society, good husbands, good parents, and good masters. But if we inquire more minutely, we shall find, that unless an individual be very much the reverse of these characters, according to their estimate, his morality is perfectly satisfactory. A good member of society, as they judge, is one who neither over-reaches nor defrauds his neighbour; but it is not necessary that he should seek the well-being of others, or that he should do aught to promote the happiness, or to increase the rectitude of those

around him. These things are generally deemed by them superfluous and inexpedient, and savour too much of an interest felt in the cause of religion to be acceptable with the worldly.

In the family circle, likewise, all are by them esteemed good who are not notoriously bad; and many a *good* husband, father and master, render their households miserable by their arbitrary conduct, or their unhappy tempers, if not by greater vices, without the slightest imputation being cast upon their moral character or deserts. The truth is, much the larger proportion of men are reckoned by the worldly, good. The slightest outside varnish is sufficient to procure the world's encomiums, and little claim to virtue indeed must that man possess, to whom the appellation of moral is denied.

In some persons of this class, selfishness seems to be the basis upon which their morals are built, and they are themselves often little aware how much their practice is influenced by this low affection. They will on no account do what might be to their prejudice in the sight of others, and the good of others interests them according as it will affect themselves. They strive that none of their actions may be *considered* wrong; and they rejoice in, and will do their utmost to augment the prosperity of those who are necessary to their own comfort or aggrandizement. To promote their in-

dividual benefit is their great object, and that their happiness can, in many ways, be effected through the medium of those connected with them, is evident. There are likewise to be found, some in whom selfishness is not so all-absorbing a ground of action, and yet where much that is good in itself is deteriorated by the influence of this principle. Such persons cannot open their heart or their hands excepting in the narrow bounds of their own family and relationship. Within this limit they are kind, considerate, and liberal, and that, perhaps, without apparent reference to, or even thought of, their own advantage; beyond it, however, no compassions flow, and no generous emotions beat. It is natural and proper that a preference should be felt and shown for those with whom we are most nearly related, and with whom we more immediately dwell; but where all besides are excluded from the slightest sympathy or interest, self may be detected as that which prompts to actions which, however they may deserve commendation, are thus robbed of their intrinsic excellence through the motive that instigates them. The charities of life are, with these persons, bound up in a contracted circle, and this circle revolves around *self;* and it is strongly to be suspected, if thus confined, that self-love is the influencing principle whence their good deeds emanate. To aid and kindly treat those who are dear to us, is nearly

allied to a selfish gratification; and if charity extends no farther, it is cramped in its energies, and stinted in its growth.

Such is the religion, and such the morality of many who rank among the best worldly characters! Still greater perversions, however, of these fundamental principles may very generally be found in other descriptions of worldly men; each devising for himself some creed upon these important points, to suit his inclination, and as a salvo to his conscience. A few, indeed, of the immoral and profane, unblushingly avow their determination to throw aside religion's trammels, and to yield no obedience to its laws; "saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." But there are more, even of this class, who pretend to maintain a religion, and a morality, foreign indeed to the true, but which, strange as it may appear, is satisfactory to themselves.

Their religion consists in never having renounced the name of Christian,—in *occasional* attendance on the outward forms of Christianity,—and in the belief that they are entitled to its privileges. Their thoughts are no more encumbered by the subject, than those of the greatest infidel are; and they would deprecate the idea, that the truths of revela tion should ever be permitted to obtrude themselves on their imaginations. Still they conceive that they are Christians, and nothing but the commis

sion of very flagrant wickedness can, as they suppose, deprive them of the right to be so considered. And here their notions are most conveniently lax and general; for almost every sin is by them deemed allowable. With the exceptions of murder and theft, and those offences which they account dishonourable, scarcely any transgression of the law is not palliated by them. A sense of honour, evincing itself chiefly by a regard to truth, is their principal moral distinction; further than this they neither pretend to practise, nor desire to imitate, the sublime precepts of the Gospel.

Oh that what is thus barren should claim to be regarded as the religion of Christ! Or that those in whom no better title to the appellation of Christian exists, should ever be permitted to usurp it! Let us turn from the affecting picture, and with heartfelt gratification, inquire, what the religion that our Divine Master taught us truly is, and what are the precepts which Christ inculcated?

Often as this cheering theme has been dwelt upon, and familiar as it ought to be to our thoughts, yet, when viewing the superficial pretence of the worldly, and the deficiencies or crimes of professing Christians, relief is brought to the mind by the recollection, that such perversion of the truth is *not Christianity*, and that no false religion which the world has ever known, can, in fact, be more completely opposed to the true, than that which

these nominal Christians, with daring hardihood, profess and practise.

It has been remarked that they take not their ideas from the Bible. This is characteristic of all classes among the worldly. We do not say of *all* that the Sacred Volume is never in their hands, or that they do not peruse its pages; but we do say that what they read makes no alteration in their sentiments; that however much their opinions may differ from what revelation dictates, they remain unchanged. They read the Bible as if their duty consisted in the mere act, and not for instruction how to live; and having performed the task, no reference is made, in thought or deed, to what has fallen under their review; the debt is paid, and conscience is clear!

Could they be prevailed upon, seriously and prayerfully, to peruse the Word of God, with a sincere desire, and earnest endeavour, to comprehend its meaning, to learn its lessons, and to imbibe its spirit, hopes might be entertained, that the light of divine truth would break in upon their darkened minds, and that the dawn of a brighter day was at hand. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." But if "the heart is hid from understanding, and the ear turned away from hear ing the law," the life-giving pages must remain

"sealed up among God's treasures,"* ready indeed to be dispensed to all, but of no utility to those who despise them.

What, then, do the Scriptures teach us respecting religion and its fruits? and what distinguishes the religion of the Bible from that which we have been considering as so generally found among nominal Christians? One material distinction between true Christianity and the mere profession of it is, that when genuine, it is deeply seated in the heart, and hence influences the life. The religion of the Bible does not skim the surface, but strikes at the root. It is not superficial but fundamental. It imparts its healing virtues to the fountain, that thence streams of health may flow.

The heart is the residence of all that is intrinsically good or bad. "A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and the end of the commandment, charity, is out of a pure heart." The heart, in fact, constitutes the man, and the hearts of all men are led captive either by God or Satan. While "man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart."

The heart is the seat of the operations of divine

* Deuteronomy xxxii. 34.

grace. It is by nature dead to all moral affections, unable to beat with love to God or man. But quickened by the Spirit, it is made alive, and becomes one in purpose and in interest with the Supreme! By the Holy Ghost the stony heart is taken out of the flesh, and a heart of flesh, given; and thus it becomes deeply affected by its lost estate, feels the turpitude of its every thought, and earnestly longs for recovery from a condition so debased. It is penetrated by a sense of the wonderful means that have been employed to effect this desired renovation, even the unexampled sufferings of the Eternal Son; and won by love thus marvellously exhibited, it embraces the salvation of Jesus, not coldly and formally, but with lively emotions of gratitude, unfeignedly, unreservedly. The language of that heart henceforward is, "what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? I will delight myself in thy statutes, I will not forget thy word."

Nor is it with resolutions and promises alone that a heart touched by divine grace can be satisfied. "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart," said the Psalmist; and when "the law of God is in the heart, none of the steps shall slide." And here we are led to notice another distinction between the religion of the Bible and that of the worldly professor,—that the former is eminently conspicuous.

The religion that the worldly profess has little to mark its existence; it is scarcely discernible, and never increases in strength or beauty. At the best, it consists in freedom from gross sin, and in the being possessed of some exterior good qualities. But the renewal of the soul from the love of sin to the love of holiness, is accomplished by divine agency, and, like the other works of God, is calculated to attract observation. They are not made to be concealed, but are destined to reflect the glory of their Author. And the path of the just is illumined by rays of divine light, through which the operation of the Most High may be traced. "We are *his workmanship created* in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* The new man "*after God is created* in righteousness and true holiness."† And it is "the *exceeding greatness of his power* to them who believe,"‡ which is manifested, in their being "*conformed to the image of his son!*"§ When the power of God operates, what shall impede the accomplishment of his purpose? And when the effect is a transformation so wonderful, as that man should bear the image of his Son, can the change pass unnoticed? Is the difference trifling between the image of the earthly, and the image of the Lord from heaven? Can the one be

* Eph. ii. 10. † Ib. iv. 24. ‡ Ib. i. 19. § Rom. viii. 29.

mistaken for the other? Or, is not the image of Christ easily to be discerned in those who bear it? The likeness in some Christians may be more complete; but *all* grow in assimilation to their Head in *all* things. And the properties which shone with such unparalleled lustre in the Saviour when he tabernacled on earth, are in some measure visible in every one of his believing people. And as "a city set on a hill cannot be hid," so the influence of the Spirit of God in the heart must appear, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." "Ye are our epistle," said Paul, "known and read of all men."

With one other distinguishing mark of true religion, when compared with that which is the mere profession of it, we shall conclude our observations on the subject. Where religion is genuine, it is not only fundamental and conspicuous, but it is likewise unlimited in its influence.

The religion of the worldly is always confined to some few deeds, generally those to which their inclinations prompt them, or to which they are led by their education or habits. The temperate will place their religion in sobriety; the frugal in carefulness; the prodigal in liberality; and all, perhaps, in a certain attention to the exterior form of divine worship, in public or in private. But they are uniformly desirous to guard against *excess* of religion; "hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther,"

is their language regarding it. They will talk of being *properly* religious, or of going *too great lengths* in religion; and they do not scruple to say that it is dangerous to give up the mind too much to religion. Thus fearful are they that the boundary line which they prescribe should be passed, and the affections become interested.

The religion which the Bible enjoins, on the contrary, extends to every thought, feeling, temper, and emotion. The whole soul, with all its dispositions, qualities and passions, is by it brought under the guidance of the revealed will of God. The work is God's, and his design, where religion is implanted, is to renew his own image in man, not partially and defectively, but completely and for ever. Therefore the transformation is universal, without limits, extending to all the desires and all the actions. Not that there is perfection in any one of them while on earth, but that the end proposed, for which the creative energy of the Most High operates, is "to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, according to his working, which worketh mightily." And even now, being alive from the dead, *all* the members are instruments of righteousness unto God. The very God of peace sanctifying, not in one or in many parts, but *wholly*. "And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Liberty in access to a throne of grace; an enlargement of heart to seek after God; free-

dom from sin that had formerly been delighted in; and, in the world to come, an entire exemption from all evil. "Jerusalem which is above is free, and the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy."

Thus, the work of God is not confined in its operation, but influences the whole man. There is no grace that is not implanted in the soul of him who is born from above; and all the graces of the Spirit, when they are implanted, increase in strength and beauty. "He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree." And the greater the advancement of any Christian in holiness, the more intense are his desires after complete assimilation to the divine likeness. From the heart he exclaims, "O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day. I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love. I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

From these few evidences it were easy to determine if religion has gained that ascendancy in our breasts which marks its reality; or, if the profession of it only is ours. Does it take its rise from the seat of all good and evil, the heart? Can none of those with whom we are conversant, be ignorant that it is to be found there from the exhibition of its fruit? And is every desire, affection, and action, in some degree influenced by it? These

are simple but searching questions; and however we may hope well respecting our spiritual state, let us not rest satisfied till we can answer them in the affirmative. What God has taught us is not of trivial importance; and to trifle through life with a concern so weighty, as whether we have reason to expect happiness or misery *eternally*, is folly not to be credited, were it not so general.

The flimsy texture of outside religion with which the worldly satisfy their consciences, can never be the principle which the Son of God became man, and in our nature lived and died, to implant. It was not for an inconsiderable benefit, but to renew the human soul after the image of God, which it had lost, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." In the land of the living, where could a price equal to this result be found? "The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it; no mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls; for the price of wisdom is above rubies!" And infinite must be the worth and the magnitude of the gift, when what may almost seem *conflict* in the ever blessed Trinity, can alone entitle to the reception of it! The hand of the Father is turned against the Son, and the sword of Divine justice is unsheathed against the *man* that is *God's fellow!* and the

Shepherd is smitten,* and what must be the result when wonders like these are accomplished? Is a benefit of little value gained?—a slight shade of distinction only produced between the characters of the unrenewed and the redeemed?—Shall we not rather conclude, that the effects are illimitable, and that the duration of them will be eternal? Yes; the people of God, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the *same image*, from *glory to glory*, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."† "And being made free from sin, and become servants to God, they have their fruit unto *holiness*, and the end *everlasting life*."‡ This is the noble consummation of the Redeemer's sacrifice. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And into the new Jerusalem "there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life."

* Zech. xiii. 7. † 2 Cor iii. 18. ‡ Rom. vi. 22.

CHAPTER V.

THE YOUNG SHOWN WHERE TO FIND HAPPINESS.

Ignorance of Religion often in the well inclined among the Young—They conceive of it as enthusiam—To think thus not blameless—Youth attractive—The Young addressed—Lord Chesterfield's testimony to the vanity of the World—Extract of a Letter to him from Voltaire—That Religion is gloomy, contradicted by fact—Clementine Cuvier; Hannah Sinclair—Striking contrast between the happiness expressed by the Religious, and the lack of it in the Worldly—The Young earnestly pled with.

"Deceiv'd; they, fondly thinking to allay
Their appetite with gust, instead of fruit
Chew'd bitter ashes."

THERE is a class of worldly characters in whom it is impossible for a Christian not to feel a lively interest—we allude to the well inclined among the young; but who, from the manner in which they have been educated, from the society among whom their lot has fallen, from prejudice, or some other cause, have not embraced the Gospel as their refuge and joy. These individuals most commonly have lived in the families of the worldly, and never having enjoyed the advantage of being instructed in the principles of genuine religion, are often totally ignorant of what it really is.

They will do many things that are praiseworthy,

with the intention to do right, and possibly to please God; but they know not the foundation upon which all goodness that is universal in its influence, and unlimited in its sway, must be built,—a reliance for pardon and acceptance on the merits of a crucified Saviour, and a dependence on the operation of the Holy Spirit, which is freely given, for the Redeemer's sake, to all who ask for it.

Such ideas, they have been taught to believe, savour of enthusiasm. They conceive of them as wild, chimerical opinions, adopted only by fanatics. Perhaps they are told that they were requisite in the time of the Apostles, and at the first promulgation of Christianity, but that now they are completely exploded by sober, thinking people, as superfluous or dangerous. The godly, (as they are often termed,) they hear spoken of as well meaning, but injudicious persons, elevated in their conduct a little above what common sense dictates, and whose heated imaginations lead them to entertain speculative theories, that are of no moment, and lead to no practical result.

To think thus of the peculiar tenets and invaluable discoveries of our religion, is undoubtedly not blameless. And even those who know no better, can never be acquitted on the score of ignorance, where such a blaze of Gospel light exists as that with which our land is favoured. None need be ignorant who can read the Word of God, and have

access to its contents. *There*, the great truths of religion are plainly revealed, and it is our own fault if we do not receive them. And yet, the circumstances in which some are placed, are much less favourable for their being instructed in what is necessary for their salvation and their peace, than those of other men; and where the design appears to be to act up to the line of duty, in so far as it is known, it is matter of deep regret that any, so inclined, should be led to depart from it.

There is something interesting and attractive in the ingenuous frankness of youth; and when amiable and estimable qualities also appear in the young, the interest is enhanced, and, "Oh! that they were the Lord's!" is the fervent desire of the believer in Jesus. But how affecting is it to see these young persons in the families of the worldly, and to know, that those in whom they naturally confide, who are the guardians of their early years, are the most ready to warn them against the way of life, and to lead them in the path that separates from God. We speak not of the pernicious example of the openly wicked, which, it is too evident, must be prejudicial to youth; but we allude to the conduct of worldly-minded parents, whose desire it is to warn their offspring against *extremes* in religion, (of all evils what they most dread,) and to initiate them in scenes of vanity and folly, which ensnare and contaminate.

It is possible these pages may be perused by some young persons whose situations are similar to what has been stated, but who have not yet become the slaves of the world. Oh! that we could induce them to reflect, ere they enlist themselves among its votaries, who are solely intent on human applause; desirous of decoration and splendour; caring for nothing but their temporal interest; and making self-indulgence, ease, and pleasure, their chief concern.

Were there no hereafter, the *attempt* might warrantably be made, to derive satisfaction from what, notwithstanding, never afforded it. Still, were it our all, it were reasonable to strive to attain something, even where others had failed. But to cast aside the certainty of blessedness for that which, on trial, has ever proved fallacious, is surely madness. We are not aware that a single instance is on record of the worldly having acknowledged that they had found what they sought,—happiness. But many times has "vanity of vanities, all is vanity," been, at the last hour, the exclamation of men of the world; and having seen, and known, the most this earth can give, they have confessed that its joys are illusive, and its possessions unsatisfying.

The testimony of one individual to the vanity of the world, after having enjoyed its favours in the highest degree, and to whom it was every thing, is so valuable, that, although well known, we make

no apology for transcribing it. So devoted was he to his idol, that outside varnish, good breeding, and good manners, constituted his model of perfection! And he enforced to his own son, that the *principal* objects to which he wished him to devote his attention, were his *appearance*, his *elocution*, and his *style;* to promote which worldly advantages, he cared not to what vices this near relative was degraded! To gloss over this part of his history, his memorialist charitably wishes that he had lived to publish his letters to his son himself, which would have given him the opportunity of *expunging* some *obnoxious* passages. But he who so unreservedly recommended the world, with its follies, its principles, and practices; in his latter days, to that son, thus avows that it had failed him;—

"I have seen," said Lord Chesterfield, "the silly rounds of business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and, consequently, know their futility, and I do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is, in truth, very low; whereas those who have not experienced, always over-rate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare; but I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decora-

tion, to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience. When I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry, and bustle, and pleasure of the world, had any reality; but I look upon all that has past as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions; and I by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose, for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No; for I really cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but killing time the best way I can, now that he has become mine enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage the remainder of the journey." Poor worldling! is *this all* that you have gained, even in time?

But it may, moreover, be useful to know, that this noble personage was deemed peculiarly fortunate among the worldly. We therefore quote a passage from a letter addressed to Lord Chesterfield, by a still more celebrated worldling and infidel, Voltaire, and which likewise proves that *he* also thought but meanly of all the world can give.

"Tully," says he, "wrote a fine treatise on Old Age, but he did not realize his assertions, and his latter years were far from being happy. You have

lived longer and more happily than he did. Your lot has been, and is still, one of the most desirable in that great lottery where the prizes are so few, and where the great prize of constant happiness has never yet been drawn by any one. Your philosophy has never been discomposed by those phantoms which have sometimes overset pretty good heads, nor have you ever been, in any respect, a pretender, or the dupe of pretenders, which, in my estimation, is an uncommon degree of merit, and contributes to that *shadow* of felicity which may be enjoyed in this short life."

Here we have the testimony of one who likewise enjoyed the world's highest favours and distinctions, that its felicity is but a shadow,—that its prizes are few, and the greatest prize unattainable,—and that the man who could write a fine treatise on Old Age, was, nevertheless, (being devoid of the consolations of religion,) not happy in his latter years. And we have this *shadow* of felicity attributed to him who himself tells us, he did not possess it. In similar language, he who is told that his lot is so favoured, compares worldly pleasure to a *dream*, which has no existence but in fancy. Yet, if it were real, it is not enviable; for it is not durable. It withers as certainly as the opening leaf is nipped by the frost of winter. Its tendency is to decay. Place a man on the highest pinnacle of worldly prosperity, and there let him remain while in the

body; he *may* feel enjoyment, but it ceases neces sarily, and of itself. To suppose an impossible case, as we are constituted, that some one were continued on earth, with youth, health, and all the gifts of time, for a thousand years, satiety and disgust would arise from the repetition of pleasure so unsubstantial as those the world affords. In the possession of such, an immortal spirit cannot solace itself. They neither ennoble nor elevate. They are trifling, they are degrading, they are vain !*

And is it for *these* that the worldly so anxiously seek; for which they, with so much eagerness, toil; and for which they lose heaven? Are these a fair exchange for *everlasting life?* "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

But possibly the young may imagine, or may be told, that religion is gloomy, and that the only satisfaction that can be derived from it, is in the hope to which it gives rise in the view of another

* An anecdote occurs to the writer, which was related to her by her lamented father, Sir John Sinclair. He was invited by a late eminent statesman, Lord Melville, then high in office, to spend New Year's Day with him at Wimbledon Common. He arrived there the day before, and in the morning repaired to the chamber of his host, to wish him a happy new year. "It had need be happier than the last," replied Lord M., "for I cannot recollect a *single happy day in it.*" And this was the man who was the envy of many, being considered at the height of worldly prosperity!

state of existence. Ah! think not so. How many testimonies might be adduced, to give the lie to a representation so false! How many, among the gay and the prosperous, have confessed, when changed by grace, that they knew not joy until they tasted it pure and unmingled from its fountain,—godliness.

Perhaps we may be permitted, in proof of this assertion, to quote the language of a young and beautiful woman, living among the most distinguished inhabitants, and in the gayest circles of the French capital. Here, every thing to allure was present, and the world, in all its splendour, held out its most attractive fascinations. She was the daughter of Baron Cuvier, and the name of her eminent sire ensured her the notice and regard of the world.

But Clementine had sought and found "the pearl of great price," and had learned to despise the glitter of earth's parade. "I want to tell you," she writes, "how happy I am. My heart has at length felt, what my mind has long understood; the sacrifice of Christ answers to all my wishes, and meets all the wants of my soul; and since I have been enabled to embrace, with ardour, all its provisions, my heart enjoys a sweet and incomparable tranquillity. Formerly, I vaguely assured myself that a merciful God would pardon me; but I now feel that I have obtained that pardon,—that

I obtain it every moment,—and I experience inexpressible delight in seeking it at the foot of the cross. My heart is full, and it is now that I understand the angelic song, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.'"

In another letter she writes, "I experience a pleasure in reading the Bible, which I have never felt before; it attracts and fixes me to an inconceivable degree; and I seek sincerely there, and only there, *the truth.* When I compare the calm peace which the smallest and most imperceptible grain of faith gives to the soul, with all that the world alone can give of joy, or happiness, or glory, I feel that the least in the kingdom of heaven is a hundred times more blessed than the greatest and most elevated of the men of the world."

And again she says, "the certainty, that without divine grace I can do nothing, but that that grace is always with me, that it surrounds me, preserves me, supports me,—this sweet assurance fills my heart; and thus I feel most profoundly, that faith alone can satisfy the void which I sometimes used to feel in my soul. The profound conviction, that there is an infinite and merciful Being, who orders all things,—that not a hair of the head falls without his permission,—and that he will control every circumstance for my real welfare, gives me an

habitual peace and tranquillity which nothing else could inspire."*

And is there ground for suspicion here that gloom possessed the mind? Is there reason to apprehend that religion was, to this young person, the source of melancholy, and that she only resorted to it as a subterfuge, earth's gifts having failed her? No; it is distinctly stated in these valuable extracts, that it "answers to *all her wishes*, and meets *all the wants of her soul;*" that "*incomparable tranquillity, habitual peace, and inexpressible delight,*" were experienced in consequence of a reception of gospel truth; that faith can *alone* satisfy the void that is felt in the soul of man; and that *nothing else* can inspire the habitual peace which true religion imparts.

Yet language like this is not peculiar; it is common to all who have learned to place their confidence in a crucified Redeemer. Among genuine believers we never hear the voice of despondency or of complaint, unless when faith fails, and they are unable to realize their interest in the blessings of salvation. Give them the possession, and the anticipation of these, and they ask no higher joy; entire satisfaction is the result. "The

* A Memoir of Clementine Cuvier appeared in the Evangelical Magazine, in 1828. The writer is indebted for these extracts from her letters, to an interesting little work entitled, "The Flower Faded." By John Angell James.

statutes of the Lord rejoice the heart, and his people rejoice in his Word, as those that find great spoil."

If we are favoured by familiar intercourse with the pious, or if we read the accounts of them, transmitted to us by those who are so, we cannot fail, also, to be struck with the conviction, that remarkable support and consolation, along with their trials, are afforded them, and that tranquillity and confidence, in days of adversity, and at the hour of death, is the fruit of reliance on the Saviour.

The authoress hopes she may be forgiven for mentioning the experience of a much loved sister, whose resignation and peace on a death-bed were eminently conspicuous. This endeared relative was, earlier than many of her contemporaries, called to her everlasting rest; but not before she had left, for the benefit of others, a short but luminous compendium of her faith, or before she had proved its sincerity, by her separation in heart from the world, and by the excellence of her temper, and her practice.

That religion was not in her productive of gloom, may be gathered from some observations which have been noticed in her memoir, and which are still fresh in the memory of the writer, to whom they were made. "I have never," said she, "been so happy as last night. I was not able to sleep, and began to meditate on the employment

of saints and angels around the throne. I ruminated until I thought I saw the multitude of the redeemed, which no man can number. I fancied I heard their angelic voices, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Methought I joined with them, and at last I concluded, by praying that I might be soon, if not immediately, removed, to unite my note of praise with theirs." "Such expressions," adds her memorialist, "illustrate the character of those highly-favoured moments, in which God is sometimes pleased to animate his faithful people, by a peculiar blessing upon their meditations, concerning the heavenly state. 'He thus giveth songs in the night.'"

When days and months of languishing were afterwards appointed her, confidence in God, and undisturbed serenity in the prospect of a future state, continued to be experienced by her. It is stated, that "at this period she said to a friend, 'I never spend *one dull hour*,' although she was very often necessarily left alone, being unable to bear the fatigue of society for any length of time together. A younger sister one day lamented that her sufferings were so great, she replied, 'I would cheerfully suffer it all over again, that you might enjoy the *same consolation from religion*, in the same circumstances.' Her uncommon patience struck every one who saw her. She never complained; and when it was noticed to her, said, 'it

would be a wonder if I were not patient, when I have so many mercies to be thankful for.' 'Her thoughts and occupations,' writes a near relative, 'were in sickness, as they had ever been in health, such as became one, so deeply impressed as she had the happiness to be, with the *unspeakable comfort*, as well as importance, which belongs to the truth as it is in Jesus.'" And again, it is added, "Never was a death-bed more tranquil and calm. Not a doubt nor a fear disturbed her. Not a complaint or a murmur once escaped her lips; all was peace, peace."*

In reference to what he had beheld of her bodily sufferings and peaceful state, and to the value of the Bible in promoting a confidence so enviable, a relative to whom she was tenderly attached thus bore testimony:—"If called upon to tend the sick-bed, and to witness the protracted sufferings of one unto whom the heart is closely knit, by the double ties of reverence and love; have we not found, that, whilst the taper of life is imperceptibly hastening to extinction, the pure lamp of faith still burns internally, with unquenchable and undiminished, nay, even with increasing brightness? Have we not perceived, that when all human help is vain,—when the memory of the past is fading away,—

* Memoir of Hannah Sinclair, prefixed to her Letter on the Principles of the Christian Faith. By the Rev. Leigh Richmond.

when the occurrences of the present cease to interest, and all personal concern in the future events of this world is about to be cut off for ever, the mercies of our God, and the promises of our Redeemer, are the theme on which the dying sufferer still loves to expatiate and to reflect? When the eloquence of the orator, the liveliness of the wit, and the sublimity of the philosopher, can no longer fascinate or instruct, the Scriptures are still listened to with avidity and delight. When a transient slumber has recruited for a time the fast decaying strength of the body, how eagerly does the mind again seek to refresh itself at this pure and inexhaustible source of spiritual peace and serenity! It is then that the perusal of the Bible disarms death of all its terrors,—it reminds the expiring Christian, that in humble reliance on the Saviour's sufferings and intercession, he is hastening to an inheritance of eternal happiness, far greater than it has entered the heart of man to conceive."*

And again, we ask, is *gloom* manifest here? Were dissatisfaction, and discontent, the result of a life spent in the service of God? And was sorrow, or comfort, the most apparent at its close? The reply to such inquiries is evident. But if we peruse the writings, or listen to the melancholy

* Speech of Sir George Sinclair, Bart. to the Bible Society at Kingston, in 1818.

lamentations of those who have spent their lives in the pursuit of worldly gratifications, we shall soon be convinced where chagrin shows itself, and where gloom really exists. The contrast is striking! Let not the subject be carelessly and hastily considered; let it be deeply pondered, and viewed with the seriousness it demands. If the pleasures of the world afford not satisfaction even in time, *where* is the inducement to make them our portion, for time is the limit of their durance; they pretend not to exist beyond it. They come with a flattering show, and dazzling appearance of earthly happiness, to entrap the unwary; but, when grasped, they are discovered to be phantoms instead of realities; and even if they should be enjoyed for a moment, they vanish when we most need their aid,—in the season of affliction, of poverty, of sickness, of old age, and at the hour of death!

But we began this chapter by addressing those interesting characters among the young, whose sincere desire it is to live as they ought, but who, from untoward circumstances, have not been accustomed to view genuine religion in its just light. With them we would importunately plead. Oh! halt, inquire, pray. Is it rational to suppose that God claims no more of your time, of your thoughts, and of your affections, than the worldly are disposed to allow? Can religion be comprised in a few cold, heartless, ceremonies? Can the world's

pleasures ensure lasting happiness? And if not, how is joy here, and joy hereafter, to be attained? In these questions, your conduct during life is involved. Oh, then, solve them without delay. If the will of God is revealed in the Scriptures, *there*, with Clementine, seek *the truth*. Seek it unweariedly, seek it prayerfully. Light, it is promised, shall be given when thus sought, to walk in the path; straight, indeed, may be the entrance, and narrow the way, but still the hallowed path that leads to unending felicity.

And yet, with all the flood of divine light that is around us, it is possible that some young person may be disposed to reply, "I do not understand your meaning. I do not know to what line of conduct you are so solicitous that I should conform. I am willing to be instructed, but, with the Ethiopian, when asked, 'Understandest thou what thou readest?' I am ready to say, how can I, except some one should guide me?"

That an individual, having little access to instruction in the all-important subject of religion may, possibly, with anxiety, seek it from our feeble efforts, is an overwhelming consideration, calculated to awaken the tenderest interest.

Oh! that direction were given to our thoughts and our pen; that we could be instrumental in pointing out to a single inquiring fellow-creature the way of life; that our attempts to enlighten, if

it were but one individual, who seeks after truth, may, by the blessing of God, be crowned with success. Greatly would such a result gladden, and rich indeed would be our recompense. Depending, therefore, upon, and earnestly praying for, the influences of divine grace, that we may write what is in accordance with the mind of the Spirit, we proceed to state what is, in our apprehension, the method revealed to us in sacred writ, by which men seek and find peace with God, peace of conscience, peace in life, and peace in death, with "an entrance ministered abundantly into the ever lasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER VI.

THE WAY OF SALVATION.

What is essential to salvation clearly revealed—Difficulties where there need be none—A sense of helplessness necessary—A sense of sin very encouraging—Receiving Christ—Salvation finished—For whom? those who desire it in whole—Believer discouraged by defect in sanctification—Address to the careless—Delay dangerous—Warfare commences with spiritual life.

"Inscribed above the portal, from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickening words, BELIEVE AND LIVE."

To point out the way of salvation generally, taking the Bible for our guide, is comparatively easy. All that is necessary for men to know, in order to their escaping eternal condemnation and inheriting everlasting life, is, thanks be to God, plainly revealed. Many difficulties may arise when perusing the Sacred Oracles, in the comprehension of mysteries, in the construction of passages, as to the chronology of dates, or, in some instances, in the meaning of words, but there is no difficulty in ascertaining the method by which God has reconciled sinners to himself, and by which guilty men are made "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the

world through lust." In these interesting discoveries of his counsel, and of his working, there is nothing obscure or enigmatical in holy writ,—all is level to any capacity,—and clearness and simplicity, when treating of such topics, are characteristic of what is written by the inspired penmen.

And yet, it is often found, that what is apparently so plain, and so intelligible to every one who will give his attention to the subject, is through the blindness of our understandings, and the perversity of our wills, not easily reduced to practice. And difficulties seem to arise in our individually engaging in the service of the Eternal, where, in fact, excepting in ourselves, none exist. And, although a highway is opened, the way of holiness, yet, in their personal experience, too many act and feel as if its entrance were still closed against them. They are disposed to say, "We cannot serve the Lord,—we know not how the attempt is to be made, or where the deficiency lies, but darkness obscures the heavenly path, and we are unable to walk in it." And many go on from year to year, with languid desires, and faint resolutions of amendment, purposing that they will do something, and scarcely knowing what they mean to do; sensible that they are not Christians in the Bible acceptation of the term, and determining that they will become so at a future period, and yet remaining unaltered in their character, and unregenerated in

their life. And it is well, if thus procrastinating, they do not "resolve and re-resolve, and then die the same."

Should any one, into whose hands these pages may fall, be conscious of an inability to submit himself to God,—should he experience that effort is vain,—that any attempt he has hitherto made has proved fruitless,—it may be encouraging to him to learn, that he has already gained a necessary step in the way to heaven,—a step so essential, that no progress can be made in the divine life without it; we allude to the knowledge that he is helpless. It is true, child of Adam, that unrenewed by grace, "you are yet without strength—you cannot serve the Lord." Paralysed in every member, enervated in every limb, you lie prostrate without the power to rise; and the dead and the unborn have not less capacity to glorify God on earth than you have. Shrink not from the thorough conviction of the humiliating fact. Let it be deeply impressed on the inmost recesses of the soul. Nor can you be too much abased from a sense of impotence and disqualification for all that is spiritually good. In this condition, we shall suppose the individual whom we address finds himself, without power, without knowledge, without capacity, without spiritual life, and sensible that he is deficient in all.

If this, my reader, is your state, earnestly we

entreat you to proceed in your inquiries, and to ascertain, as in the sight of the Omniscient, if to helplessness, in your case, is not added guilt. Are there not many instances in which you have offended, and do offend, God? Do you keep *perfectly* His law, which is holy, just, and good? To what do your desires and affections tend? To God or the world; to sin or holiness; to what is earthly or what is heavenly? There is an opposition in each of these, that makes it impossible we can love what is so diametrically contrary; one of each only possesses our hearts, which possesses yours? Do you delight in intercourse with God, in prayer and praise? Is it your chief ambition to do His will? Is it nothing to you should men condemn, if God justifies? Do you thirst for worldly gratifications, or for those purer joys which are at God's right hand for evermore? Or can you break the commandments of God without remorse?—virtually saying, "I will not have the Lord to reign over me." If, when entering on these, or similar inquiries, defect be apparent; if you are sensible, in the words of inspiration, which cannot delude, "that in you dwelleth no good thing; that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; that from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness; that by nature you are a child of wrath, even as others;"—if this be your heart-felt experience, then the very ground-work of Chris-

tianity is found in you; and warranted by the Word of God, we would say, for you there is hope. The entrance to the road to heaven is secured; and if the threshold be merely crossed, the path lies open. Oh! turn not back; move onwards, "ye are not far from the kingdom of God." "Before you is set life and death, blessing and cursing, choose ye, *this day*, whom ye will serve." It is the Spirit of God convinces of sin;* and where an abiding perception that we are dead in trespasses and sins is implanted by his divine agency, in the encouraging language that was addressed to the Church of old, we would say, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

The next advance in the way to eternal blessedness, for which, if in these circumstances, you are prepared, is the most essential, and the most decisive, as to the prospect of reaching the promised rest, that can be taken. It invariably obtains all necessary aid for the helpless, provides a healing balm for soul-sickness, and ensures a free pardon for the most guilty!—We mean, the acceptance of Christ as our Saviour.

The inestimable blessings of His salvation are offered to us,—not forced upon us. They are freely given, but they must be received; they are

* John, xvi. 8.

held out, but they must be taken. There is but one method of communication with Him "that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore," by which we can make known our willingness to participate in the benefits of His sacrifice,—and that is prayer. By prayer we hold converse with God, and the helpless and the guilty may, with assurance of success, implore strength and forgiveness from Him who is mighty to save. "When he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor, his arm brought salvation." That powerful arm, on which creation leans, bore the mighty load, beneath the weight of which men and angels would have sunk. And well-nigh had He fainted under it, when strong crying, and tears, and bloody sweat, were wrung from him, ere he could say, "It is finished." Hear, and exult, inhabitant of the world! He whose justice demanded satisfaction for sins that cannot be numbered, it is He that pronounced the work of redemption "finished." It is not half accomplished, it is not uncertainly accomplished, it is altogether *finished*. At creation "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good." And like the other works of God, this work is also perfect; and He who reigns supreme uttered, "It is finished." And what potent arm shall in an individual case hinder the triumphant Redeemer from conferring the redemption which he hath *finished!* "Ye

are God's building," said an apostle. And which *of us*, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? And shall THIS MAN, this EMANUEL, "begin to build, and not be able to finish?" Or shall he, meeting the strong man armed, with thousands of his lieges, send an embassage of peace, because he is unequal for the strife? No, surely. He counted the cost, and great as the cost was, the price was fully and willingly paid. "Jesus *knowing all things that should come upon him*, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?" "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and *how am I straitened till it be accomplished?*" "The cup which my Father hath given me, *shall I not drink it?*" The work is done, and the redeemed, individually and collectively, are safe in the everlasting arms, and none can pluck them thence!

But what is finished? Not the salvation of men universally,—for all, we are assured, are not saved, but the salvation of those who come to Christ to receive what He lived and died to bestow; a free pardon, entire sanctification, and eternal happiness. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."* "Christ loved

* Isaiah xl. 2.

the Church, and gave himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."* "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."† And again we ask, are these the gifts for which you plead at a throne of grace? Do you importunately pray for forgiveness of your daily multiplying transgressions for the Redeemer's sake? And do you, with equal earnestness, implore to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, to be made a new creature, one of Christ's peculiar people who are zealous of good works? And is the purchased possession, the inheritance of the saints, all your salvation and all your desire? If so, hear the joyful sound, your redemption is finished. "Christ *hath* redeemed you from the curse of the law, being made a curse for you."‡ "God *hath from the beginning* chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."‖ "This is the record, that God *hath* given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son."§ It is by receiving what Christ purchased, and offers, that we "enter in through the gates to the city." This is the good old way by

* Eph. v. 25–27. † Rom. vi. 23.
‡ Gal. iii. 13. ‖ 2 Thes. ii. 13. § 1 John v. 11.

which, if we walk therein, we shall find rest for our souls. A way opened by anguish and death on the part of the Surety; but a way pleasant and easy of access on the part of the redeemed. There is no other way by which what we need can be given us.—Righteousness, santification, strength, atonement, we want and have not. Thus, and thus *alone*, are gifts so precious obtained. Left to ourselves we must faint, and fall, and die the second death; supported by *Omnipotence*, "we are made more than conquerors through Him that loved us." When united to Christ, the work of renovating the soul becomes His, not ours. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."* "If this counsel or work be of men it might come to nought. But if it be of God, it cannot be overthrown, for who shall be found to fight against God?"

These are the cheering assurances with which the Word of God abounds; and which are addressed to the whole human race who seek an interest in the Redeemer, to him that thirsts, to him that asks, to whomsoever will. But having applied to Christ for his finished salvation, and thus laid our help upon Him for all spiritual benefits, for peace here, and blessedness eternally; are we thenceforward, it may be inquired, become a por-

* Eph. ii. 10.

tion of his little flock, to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom?

We have already stated that the work of redemption is completed, and that our part is to accept of it; therefore, in so doing we are equally safe as if we were now on the right hand of our Judge. And yet there are many who deceive themselves with the idea that they have accepted the Saviour's offered gifts, when in fact there is nothing that they are less solicitous to obtain. And in the acceptance of the Redeemer's purchase as a *whole*, insincerity may be detected in those, who frequently say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." It is the reality, not the semblance, of willingness, that brings any sinner to the foot of the cross, and thus ensures his salvation. The most unlimited of the Gospel invitations, and none can be more free, are nevertheless addressed to those who *will*, for they only receive them. Some are willing to receive pardon, who are unwilling that their hearts should be renewed. They desire not that the image of God may be restored, which was lost by the fall. Yet the design of redemption is to make men holy as well as happy, the one being the consequence of the other. Its efficacy to transform is ever visible in the souls of the redeemed. It is in us, and with us, and by us, that the Spirit of God operates; and to effect the work of redemption irrespective of the renewal of the heart to holiness, is impossible.

The Almighty, we may reverently affirm, cannot make a slave of the world, continuing such, happy; for the happiness God offers he is unwilling to receive; it is distasteful to him; it is no happiness to *him*. The utterance of a few cold words in the presence of the Eternal, cannot deceive the Omnipresent Searcher of the heart. He knows what we truly wish, and will not "give ear unto a prayer that goeth out of feigned lips." The desire of sanctification is one of the strongest evidences of having received the atonement, and it is invariably found in those who sincerely seek the redemption of Jesus, for it is an essential part of that redemption which his people seek. The Church is sanctified in Christ;* and its inheritance is among them which are sanctified.† To save us, and yet leave us unchanged, is as great a contradiction in terms, as to say a corpse is made alive when it remains dead. It is *from* our sins that Jesus came to save.‡

But, should any of the careless or the worldly say, they *are* desirous to become Christians indeed, to come to Christ for all his gifts, and to be sanctified as well as pardoned; where, then, is the proof that these are their desires? What we are anxious should be ours, we are ready to embrace every mean to acquire; and what means have they ever

* 1 Cor. i. 2. † Acts. xxvi. 18. ‡ Matt. i. 21.

used to promote their sanctification? None can be successful, it has been observed, without application in earnest to Him who "giveth power to the faint, and who, to them that have no might, increaseth strength." Yet, subsequent to this, and depending upon the assistance thus promised, all will be resorted to that the Word of God enjoins, seeking direction in the sacred page, and from the spirit of truth. Our daily intercourse with society, as well as our solemn assemblies; our silent meditations, as well as our outward duties; our inward thoughts, and our external actions, all may conduce to sanctification; and in every thing the Christian strives to advance and accomplish this most desired end. He knows, indeed, that "without Christ he can do nothing;" but with equal certainity he rejoices to know that "it is God which worketh in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And thus, if the worldliness of our affections gives the lie to our profession, no assertions, however positively affirmed, can prove its reality.

But here one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells may be ready to exclaim, "Ah! you say truly, it is by the sanctification of their natures that the disciples of Jesus are distinguished. They are blameless and harmless, the son of God without rebuke, shining as lights in the world, and holding forth the word of life. In Christ Jesus neither

circumcision, availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; and would to God that this mark of belonging to his family on earth were mine! But I can lay no claim to a gift so precious as that of the influence of divine grace. My heart is so hard, my affections so worldly, and my good deeds so few, and so defiled by sin, that I must conclude I am still alienated from God, and have no inheritance in his kingdom.—And who taught you, disciple of Jesus, to *feel*, that the gift of divine grace is precious? No man naturally esteems it so. The gifts relating exclusively to time, and no other, are what the worldly seek. Give them health, and wealth, and pleasure here, and spiritual attainments they never covet. Alienation of heart from God, which you dread, belongs not to you, for you wish to participate in that holiness of which God is the author, the depository, the fountain, and, by comparison, the solitary instance. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou *only* art holy."* Every longing after perfection comes from its source; each prayer to be freed from sin is the effect of the operation of the Spirit; the desire of grace *is* grace. Therefore, take encouragement; the soul whose chief ambition is to grow in holiness, may rest secure in the Saviour's promised aid. "He that hath begun

* Rev. xv. 4.

a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Forget not that the work is *his*. "Every one that is called by my name, I have *created* him for my glory, I have *formed* him, yea, I have *made* him."* Let the belief of this animating truth excite to more earnest prayer, to more unwearied endeavour, and to more implicit trust. "In the Lord you have righteousness and strength. And in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and glory."†

There is another class of men whose consciences may convince them of the truth of what has been stated,—that they are helpless, that they are guilty, and that they must become regenerated, and walk in newness of life, ere they can be be admitted into the presence of the Eternal; and yet, strange as it may seem, make no attempt, and form no resolution, to learn the way of peace. Oh! that but one in these circumstances would listen while we entreat him "to be *reconciled to God*." These wondrous words are not ours, they are what the Holy Ghost indites. They are found in the embassage of reconciliation, which the Almighty, by his servants, promulgated. "Now then," said an apostle, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."‡

* Isa. xliii. 7. † Isa. xlv. 24, 25. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 20.

Whence language thus entreative, thus condescending, thus marvellous?—GOD BESEECHES!—CHRIST PRAYS! Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, it is because man *will not* BE RECONCILED TO GOD! "An *enemy* in mind by wicked works,"* —"a friend of the world, and an *enemy* of God,"† —is feeble, dying, ruined man! And how will a strife thus unequal terminate? On whom will the palm of victory be conferred? Oh! be persuaded to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." Truly may He say, "I called, and ye refused;" *I called!—I besought!—I prayed!* And still the offers of reconciliation sound in your ears. "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "All things are ready, come unto the marriage."

Possibly, the heart of some one who peruses these lines, may be enlarged to run the way of God's commandments. Possibly, a salvation thus graciously, thus freely offered, some of our readers may feel inclined to accept. If so, with earnestness we would press the necessity of not allowing another hour to elapse, ere the life of faith be begun. Many have designed to become followers of the Lamb, and that design has never been put in execution.

* Col. i. 21. † Jas. iv. 4.

"In human hearts what bolder thoughts can rise
Than man's presumption on to-morrow's dawn?
Where is to-morrow?—in another world.
For numbers this is certain; the reverse
Is sure to none; and yet, on this Perhaps,
This Peradventure, infamous for lies,
As on a rock of adamant, we build
Our mountain-hopes; spin our eternal schemes,
And, big with life's futurities, expire."

Without delay, therefore, let the die be cast on which your all depends. Hasten to a throne of grace. Plead your necessities, for to whom can you go? Christ hath the words of eternal life: plead his unlimited invitations, which extend to every creature: plead the price he paid to win souls to himself: plead the triumphs of his cross in every new trophy of his victory: plead the destruction, thus promoted, of Satan's empire, and the enlargement of the kingdom of God: and ever remember that the Redeemer lends a willing ear to the faintest cry for help. "Lord save us, we perish," infallibly secures the outstretched arm of the Mightiest. He is, as has just been shown, more ready to extend it for our succour, than we are to receive its aid. But if brought to rest upon that which is the prop of worlds, there is no risk that the support will fail. Fail it cannot while the strength of Jehovah remains unimpaired, and his purposes of grace unaltered. "Saith the *Lord of hosts*, I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Yet, think not that if become a child of God by

faith in Christ Jesus, nothing is thenceforward necessary for you to do. It were folly to suppose so. The labourer, knowing that God must give the increase, does not neglect to till the ground; nor does the mariner, believing that the winds and the waves must bring him to his desired haven, omit to provide the rudder and the canvass. In these instances, and many others, we easily comprehend that God works by means. And, although the great work of redemption is indeed finished in respect of the price that is paid, and the power that is given, still, the means by which it is accomplished is through a change in the heart of man, influencing the life. In one sense, therefore, from the time that this salvation is received, the work is only begun. Then must commence the good fight of faith; then the wrestling against principalities and powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness in high places; to withstand which, the impenetrable and invincible armour of God must be taken. Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, success is certain, and yet a warfare must be encountered, and a conflict sustained, that terminates only with life. Energy for the combat, and strength to prevail, is derived solely from God; it is "he that teacheth the hands to war and the fingers to fight. He is the Fortress, High Tower, Deliverer, and Shield, who subdueth the people under us." And still it is

we who fight,—still it is *in man* that His strength is made perfect. And it is on our weakness and infirmity that the power of Christ rests.*

It is important to ascertain the nature of this warfare, we shall, therefore, make it the subject of the following chapter. And may assistance be granted to us, as we proceed in our inquiries respecting those essential truths, which, when believed and practised, conduce to the glory of God, and ensure the salvation of men.

*2 Cor. xii. 9.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE.

Mankind, by nature, in a state of warfare with God—Christian's warfare is with Satan—Strife with evil not natural to man—Actions of unregenerated, evil—Characteristics of Christian's warfare:—Much in earnest; deep humility; of an exterminating quality—Certainty of the result—Are we engaged in this warfare?—Christians should use their weapons—Redemption irrespective of any thing in us—This warfare shall cease.

"Tell him withal
His danger, and from whom; what enemy,
Late fall'n himself from heaven, is plotting now
The fall of others, from like state of bliss:
By violence? No, for that shall be withstood;
But by deceit and lies."

To constitute a state of warfare there must be opposition. If we fight, we must have something wherewith to contend; where there is agreement, there can be no warfare.

In the preceding chapter, it has been noticed, that the fallen descendants of Adam are in this state with the Most High God; that worms of this earth contend with Him who reigns supreme over matter and spirit; that the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable Jehovah is willing that the unequal strife should cease, and sends an embassage of

reconciliation; but that men, generally, *will not* be reconciled to God.

The Christian's warfare, of which we are now to treat, is the opposite of that in which the enemies of God engage. It is a warfare, not with God, but with Satan; and, unlike the opposition which defenceless man raises against sovereign power, with condign ruin impending, it is accompanied by strength from on high, provided with complete armour, and ensured of victory! The strife in which the Christian is engaged, is with that against which his Divine Master likewise fights—all evil: "Whatsoever opposeth or exalteth itself above that is called God; all the deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." But the evil from which the greatest conflict arises is internal: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." The work of renovation has been begun in the soul of that man who is made willing to receive Christ in all his offices as his Saviour. And to him a new birth has been given, and a new principle is implanted, whence the warfare with evil originates. The tendency of this creation in the soul is to stem the torrent of iniquity, whether from within or from without; to dethrone the arch-deceiver of the nations; and to restore to his kingdom, which is established in the heart, the rightful sovereign, Zion's King.

It were comparatively easy to preserve the *conduct* void of offence, but the purity which the believer strives to attain reaches to the inward emotions of his soul. His strife is, chiefly, with the sinful propensity; with that to which he is naturally prone; and herein lies the special difficulty with which this fight is carried forward, and the indispensable necessity of the divine aid, which is afforded in this warfare.

By nature, "the imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually." Therefore, to strive with evil implies a direction given to the feelings and motives of action, which, since the fall, does not otherwise exist. No man, without the influences of the Holy Spirit, strives with evil. Evil is the atmosphere in which the natural man breathes: "Ye, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts unto your children," said our Lord; "The heart of the sons of men is *full of evil*," said Solomon.

Nor let it be affirmed, that the actions of unregenerated men are often good. They may be so in their results, but still they are evil in themselves. If the fountain be impure, so are the streams which flow from it; and from an unconverted heart never issued a holy deed. Many an action that seems praiseworthy, if weighed in the balance of the Sanctuary, will be found wanting. Some sinister motive, some selfish intention, lurks unobserved,

often unknown to the individual himself, which alters the character of the act: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."

It may be useful to inquire more particularly into the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian's warfare with evil; which may not only enable us to ascertain if we are engaged in it, but may be assisting and encouraging to us in prosecuting the conflict.

And one mark which is indispensably necessary to prove that we fight with evil, is, that we are much in earnest. To fight requires energy, and while a combat lasts, so must the resistance; when we yield, warfare ceases. The warrior is inspired with an ardent desire of conquest; and in encountering formidable opponents, resolute determination can alone give promise of success. A pusillanimous spirit is not fit for battle; cowards court defeat. And thus it is with him who fights under the banner of the Cross. He is in league with heaven against sin and Satan, and in the strength of grace, he is resolutely determined to combat and to subdue every spiritual foe. Earnestly he longs for deliverance from a thraldom so burdensome as the dominion of sin. Hateful as the monster has become to him in every form, it is still the most abhorred when detected in his own breast. Thence, by any means, he would expel it. Weapons and armour are given him; the sword of the Spirit,

the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation; and thus accoutred, he valiantly goes forth, conquering and to conquer. With that "abominable thing which God hates," he will hold no parley, for the will of God is one with his; and his most fervent prayer is, "Order my steps in Thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

To this earnest desire of freedom from sin, may be added another mark, which is equally characteristic of the Christian's warfare, that it is accompanied by deep humility. It is not in the earnestness with which he strives, or in his desire of conquest, that the Christian confides. Upon his own prowess or strength he has no reliance. And if there be a truth which is impressed with a conviction that is irresistible upon his heart, it is this,—that to root out evil from the soul of man is the work only of the Mightiest. The opposing principle with which he contends he feels to be strong, and knows to be inherent; ability to subdue it, in himself he has none. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." And, "*He* hath done marvellous things; *His* right hand and *His* holy arm hath gotten Him the victory," is the triumphant shout the redeemed shall hereafter raise. To be in earnest, is indeed a proof that we have entered the lists with the destroyer, and are fighting in a strength that is not our own

But it is from the power that is given to *the faint*, and from the increased strength of them that have *no might*, that they that wait upon the Lord, mount up with wings as eagles; run, and are not weary; walk, and are not faint. And, confiding in the promises, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them;" hope is invigorated, power is given, purity imparted. And "though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand;" therefore, united with humility is the assurance of safety; and if we fight in that combat wherein God himself is engaged, "out of weakness we are made strong."

There is another characteristic of this conflict, which ought not to be omitted in the consideration of it,—that it is of an exterminating quality. The opposing principle and that which is opposed, cannot ultimately both live; peace can never be restored; one must die. If enlisted in the warfare with evil, either the Spirit which conflicts, or the evil with which he contends, must finally cease to exert its influence on the soul. In this warfare there is no quarter given; uprooting is the aim,

and destruction the design, of the combatants. Neither truce, nor cessation, nor retreat, are practicable; having engaged in the Christian warfare we must fight to the end. If evil exists in the heart so must conflict. Arms of defence and of contest must never be laid down. Victory itself must not satisfy till the triumph be complete, and the death-blow final. If we sleep, so will not the principle we oppose. The adversary is vigilant, "seeking whom he may devour;" and his purpose is to crush the good seed, and give the mortal wound to all that is of heavenly origin in the soul. And equally is it the purpose of the Redeemer, the Spirit, and the redeemed, that evil shall die where grace lives. They shall exist together while in the body striving for the mastery, but an eternal separation shall be put between them, for assimilate they cannot. "What communion hath light with darkness?"

And this leads us to an obvious conclusion, that the Christian's warfare with evil is attended with certainty as to the result. Under what banner does he fight? Who is his Confederate, his Ally? Who the Captain of his salvation?—He whose glory covers the heavens, whose brightness is as the light, by whom the everlasting mountains are scattered, and the perpetual hills do bow. And the sun and the moon stand still in their habitation at the light of His arrows, and at the shining of

His glittering spear. It is He JEHOVAH, who goeth forth for the salvation of his people. "And at what time *He* shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it," where is the potent arm that shall successfully contend against Him? "His hand hath formed the crooked serpent,"* and shall He not subjugate that which He hath formed? May not the Omnipotent address the great enemy of souls as He did the Assyrians,—"I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." "The arrows of God are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under Him. And the burden of sin shall be taken from off the shoulder, and the yoke from off the neck; and the yoke shall be destroyed, because of thy anointing. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them."

Such is the security that they shall ultimately triumph, with which the children of God combat with evil. "They run not as uncertainly; they

* Job xxvi. 13.

fight not as one that beateth the air." They know that victory is ensured to them; and that although beset with foes the most inveterate, resolute, and powerful, still, even while the battle lasts, the inhabitants of Zion may "cry out and shout, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of them."

And now let the question, with seriousness and impartiality, be put,—Are we engaged in this warfare?—It is not the nature of strife to be hidden from him that strives. To war is an act; no man fights without being conscious that he does so. And if we have never felt a struggle between the evil propensities that are natural to us in our fallen state, and the new nature which is given to believers in Jesus, this warfare does not exist in us. And if we have never resisted evil in the strength of grace, the life of faith is not begun; we are yet in our sins. The very first acting of spiritual life is opposition to every thing that is contrary to the holiness of God. Without internal contest the heart must be altogether good, or altogether bad. If there is any good thing implanted within, it must oppose that which is evil: or any evil propensity will oppose that which is good. Principles so adverse *must* contend; they are at the furthest possible point of separation from each other; and where both are found in the same breast, although one should be weak and the other

strong, still conflict naturally follows. But there is no soul on earth free from evil. "There is none that doeth good, no not one."* "All have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God;"† wherefore, if an effort to subdue corruption be not maintained, it becomes manifest that we are destitute of *good*, that "every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually." Shrink not, therefore, from a discovery thus palpably true, that in the breast where the Christian's warfare is unknown, dwelleth no good thing. He who "delights in the law of God after the inward man, feels another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind."‡

And yet it is possible some child of God may be ready to exclaim, "Alas! I know nothing of the conflict you have described; I never experienced this warfare; and if it is a necessary consequence of being born of God, a proof that we belong to Christ's little flock, I must have been deceiving myself in the hopes I entertain of being interested in the Saviour's precious redemption, and that I am walking in the narrow way that leadeth to life." You conceive, Christian, that you are unacquainted with this warfare. But have you never felt a proneness to any thing that is contrary to the pure and holy will of God? Have

* Rom. iii. 10. † Ib. iii. 23. ‡ Ib. vii. 22, 23.

you never discerned an internal propensity to aught that is not in accordance with the perfect precepts of Christ? Have you never detected any sinful tendency within? Does no unholy thought ever obtrude? And is no bias to what is unworthy in action ever discoverable? And if you must plead guilty to these charges, have you never prayed for strength to overcome evil inclinations? And have you never striven, trusting in Almighty aid, to conquer every evil desire; and to subdue, through the power of God, all in your soul that is inimical to his purity? And have there not been times when you have fallen, and when the complaint has been wrung from you, "wo is me for I have sinned?" And have there not been periods when grace has triumphed, and when Satan has seemed bruised under your feet? It must be so. There is not an individual with no tendency to sin; and there is no genuine believer who does not strive to live a life of holiness, and to bring forth fruit unto God. And these contrary propensities, the wish to do good while evil is present, or the tendency to evil when holiness is implanted, create the Christian warfare, and induce the conflict of which we write. And although some of the disciples of Christ may not have been accustomed to apply these terms to what they have experienced, still, grace and sin in the same breast, like fire and water, must produce opposition, which

can only cease through the extinction of one of them.

To all who have come to Christ for salvation, therefore, we say, use the weapons that are placed in your hands, and fight against sin. Who goeth a warfare at his own charges? It is on the ability and strength of Him who commands, that the security of conquest depends. It is Christ who enables his people to fight. It is He who "divides the spoil" with the weak and the strong. But beware that you do not rest satisfied with acknowledging the necessity of this warfare. Be very solicitous to engage in it resolutely, and perseveringly. Let not the assent be generally given, that thus it must be, without the particular application to your own individual case. With what temptations are you assailed? Against what particular sins do you strive? What iniquity most easily besets you? Is it pride, or worldliness, or selfishness, or more glaring evil, that in you must be subdued? These, or any other sins, will struggle for the mastery; but courageously fight on, for "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." Victory is ensured. Sin and Satan shall be vanquished, and all evil banished from the souls of the redeemed finally and for ever. The song of triumph shall burst in shouts of exultation from the multitude upon whom the second death hath no power, who are without fault before the throne

of God. Without *fault*,—not only without transgression, without crime, but without the slightest taint of error, or mixture of defect. And shall not the state of warfare the believer has left, add to the sweetness of the repose and rest of heaven's joy? No conflict there, for there is nothing with which to contend; within and without purity reigns; nothing that defiles can enter. Wherefore, let the assurance of success quicken exertion, and enspirit even during partial defeat. Forget not that it is against the holiness of God that the monster, Sin, arises; that it must be vanquished, or God dethroned; and, that where it shall exist eternally in the world of wo, it shall be a prisoner enchained, a trophy of the vengeance of a justly incensed Deity.

In league, Christian, with the Eternal, lay not down your arms. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Let each returning year, and month, and day, be marked by new conquests over spiritual foes and evil propensities. Let your thoughts, words, and actions, be guarded with jealous care, and all impurity of heart and life be fought against by the aid of power from on high. Thus only can you be satisfied that the principle of opposition to sin is found in you, viz., grace; and this victorious principle, where it is found, shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life. The faintest struggle to overcome evil, proceeding

from the desire of holiness, is big with consequences unutterably glorious, for on the soul that strives against sin, God operates. And where the foundation is laid by God, there shall "he bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it."

This, then, is the way of salvation, to come to Christ *just as we are*, guilty and helpless, for the redemption which He has accomplished, and freely offers,—conscious that we can do nothing good, to cast ourselves in prayer at the Redeemer's feet, relying on his mercy, and believing that there is no human being who is not welcome to reap the benefit of His perfect life and meritorious sacrifice,—that He is more willing to receive us than we can be to obtain the blessedness he bestows. Thus we become interested in the finished work of Jesus; and are warranted to believe that we are accounted perfect in the sight of God, through the perfection of our Surety, whose righteousness is imputed to his people; and that all our guilt is cancelled by the sufferings and death of the immaculate Lamb, who bore the load of Divine wrath, which was due to us, as an atonement for the sins of many. And, as the best deeds, even of believers, are polluted by sinful emotions, and, therefore, are deserving of punishment rather than reward, an abiding conviction must rest on our minds, that no work of ours can entitle us to any

thing, yet that from the time when we become Christians indeed, a principle is implanted which gradually exterminates evil, and leads to God. We must, therefore, henceforward, depend upon him for an ability to live to his praise, and in his strength fight the good fight of faith, striving against sin, which believers only are empowered to do.

The redemption of God's people is totally irrespective of themselves, so that should they die immediately after their conversion, and before they had time to prove the sincerity of their faith by a change of life, they are safe for eternity, because they are forgiven and accepted by imputation of Christ's life and death. Yet the benefit of this imputation would avail little did not Christ work in us, as well as for us; nothing that defiles can enter heaven; or were it possible that a sinner, continuing such, were brought there, he would bring hell with him. The grand design, therefore, of redemption, is to "purify the heart by faith," thus fitting sinful man for the presence and the enjoyment of God. And when, as is the more common case, believers live to evince to the world the new nature they have received, the influences of the blessed Spirit will appear in their whole life and conduct, evidencing that they are "a peculiar people, zealous of good works,"—that they feel "they are not heir own, for they are bought with a price; and,

therefore, are desirous to glorify God in their body and spirit, which are his."

Believer in Jesus, take courage! the Christian's warfare shall cease. Your heart shall be purified from all alloy of sin. In the realms of bliss there shall be no strife. In the inner man shall be unity of purpose, of desire, of propensity, for holiness not merely predominates, but alone exists there. Within and without discord is unknown to the glorified spirits of the redeemed. No jarring note, no tendency to evil, nothing to hurt or destroy, but universal harmony prevails among heaven's inhabitants. It shall be *felt* that the heart is completely renovated,—that the likeness of God is anew implanted,—that sin is extinct in the soul,—that it can no longer fight or tempt, for it is excluded,—good no more shall struggle with evil, for evil is shut out. The battle is won, the foe is disarmed, his forces are routed, they are driven from the field enmity is slain, and can rise no more for ever. "In patience, therefore, possess your souls. Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry. And he that hath wrought you for the self-same thing, is God, who also hath given you the earnest of the Spirit."

Thus, believers in Jesus, while on earth, are surrounded by what is inimical to the life of godliness. They experience in their own breasts opposition to that new nature they have received, and

which is of heavenly origin; and the world, in many ways, proves a hindrance to the growth of the good seed their God hath implanted. But the time is short. "The earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up; and, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." "Therefore," said an apostle, "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And to him be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE OF HOLINESS.

Christian's Warfare shall end in peace—Change in Believers more or less rapid—Their love of holiness—Attributes of God incomprehensible; love, light, holiness, life, eternal existence—Infinitude of God's excellencies—Christian's delight in God—Holiness and happiness inseparable—The desire of holiness given in order to its gratification—Holiness progressive—Do *we* feel that holiness and happiness are inseparable?—How are we affected towards its infinitude?—Heaven's bliss inconceivable.

"O for a glimpse of Him my soul adores!
As the chas'd hart, amid the desert waste,
Pants for the living stream: for Him who made her,
So pants the thirsty soul, amid the blank
Of sublunary joys."

"And all the palm-crown'd sons of holiness,
With garments wash'd in their Redeemer's blood,
Shout their hosannahs round his throne, and join'd
With angels, and to angels equal made,
Bathe in the fount of ever-during bliss."

It has been shown in the preceding chapters, that the believer's state while on earth is a state of conflict; that opposition to the life of faith may be anticipated from the people of the world, by whom he is surrounded, and that opposing principles are implanted in his own breast, which struggle for the victory.

Happily, however, this condition shall not always endure. It is but the introduction to a state of perfect peace, in which such a conflict never fails to terminate; for the triumphs of the believer in Jesus over sin and Satan shall be everlasting The soul that fights the good fight of faith, is partaker of that grace which shall at length purify it from all internal depravity, and fit it entirely for heaven's joy. To promote this glorious end, the children of the kingdom are continued in this world of strife. They must be rendered meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, ere they can be admitted to join the angelic throng; and the heart must be renovated and changed, ere it can enter the society of the blessed.

This change is instantaneous in its nature, and leads ultimately and invariably to the same result, —the restoration of the perfection of character which man has lost, but in which he was originally created. It is accomplished by the energy of the Most High, and, therefore, its effects are sure and durable, but never in their fullest extent completed, while the subjects of renovation continue upon earth. It is termed in the sacred writings, a passing from death unto life,* a new birth,† a creation.‡ The progress in this divine life is

* John v. 24. † John iii. 3–6. Gal. iv. 29.
‡ Eph. ii. 10; iv. 24. 2 Cor. v. 17

sometimes very gradual, or may be, of more rapid growth, but it is generally not only real, but visible in believers. "They go from strength to strength," and often their "faith groweth exceedingly," and "the Holy Ghost is shed on them abundantly."

"There is a proof that, to restore the image of God in all those whose hearts are changed by his grace, is the ultimate design of the Almighty, in the value which thenceforward they entertain for holiness. No sooner is the soul born again from above, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, than hatred of sin, and longing desires after perfect purity, are implanted. At first, indeed, when newly awakened to a sense of danger, and made alive to the powers of the world to come, anxiety to embrace the hope set before them in the Gospel, and joy proportionate to the degree in which the wondrous scheme of redemption is unfolded and received, may so absorb the mind of Christians, that their thoughts may, for the period, be little engaged in contemplating the beauty of the Divine character. But seed is sown which germinates in time; and the essence of true religion was, and will ever be, an assimilation to God in the love of holiness. Instances there are, where, from the first dawn of spiritual life, this love has been so much the ruling passion of the soul, that the perception of it has been even

stronger than the desire of personal safety; and, where redemption itself has not drawn forth livelier feelings of admiration, than the glorious perfections of the immaculate Jehovah! When, however, in the young convert, it is not so prominently developed, it will always be found to exist, and will grow and gather strength unceasingly. How inexpressibly glorious, how transcendently captivating to the renewed mind, is but the distant sight of ineffable perfection! It is but a glance, that, while in this world, we are capable of receiving of the glory that is God's; but that glance enchants. Is there any thing in heaven or on earth to be compared with the view the Scriptures unfold of the clustered excellencies of the Eternal? And how is the value of these excellencies heightened by the bright radiance of infinity which is attached to each! An infinitude of perfection dazzles while it charms, and transforms, while it satisfies. When the soul in which grace abides can catch a glimpse of beauty so complete, its boundlessness entrances; and lesser love is lost in admiration and praise of that which only is lovely. The beams from this effulgence which reach our world are resplendent, and cast a gleam on the dark abode of sin and misery. Seen through a glass darkly, they are brighter than the sun, and they blind the mind's eye to all other good.

But, "who can by searching find out God?

Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" Who can discover intrinsically the attributes of God? Who can understand what they are in their amplitude as found in God?—What is love?—love as a fountain,—love in its fulness,—unlimited love? What to *be* love?—to have the being compounded of love?—to love *inherently—perfectly?* The meaning is hid from us. Man cannot see it—man cannot feel it—what can we know? What is light?—light without shade—light from which darkness vanisheth—essential light—His marvellous light? This light no man can approach unto; no man hath seen, or can see it.* To think we conceive of it, is to put darkness for light. What is holiness?—holiness in its essence—unmingled, uncontaminated holiness—the holiness of Him "that *is* holy"†—"who *only* art holy?"‡ What is that darling attribute by which Jehovah swears,§—*that* through which his glory especially shines?‖ Can he that is born of a woman, the unclean, the polluted, the iniquitous, know? Can sinners comprehend the immaculate holiness of God? What *can* they know? What is life? *the* Life—that First Cause which animates what ever lives—from whom life in its infinite variety is derived and upheld in millions of spirits,—in mortals,—in the

*1 Tim. vi. 16. † Rev. iii. 7. ‡ Rev. xv. 4.
§ Amos iv. 2. ‖ Exod. xv. 11.

almost endless diversity of creatures, even which inhabit earth, from the highest grade—man, to the reptile, and the animalculæ; and which, doubtless, extends throughout interminable space, where countless worlds are, in all probability, peopled with life? What is this principle? Can we comprehend it? It is origination, immensity, diffusiveness, and it is incomprehensible to man! What is an eternal existence? Can we grasp the idea; is there a conception of it within us? Can we number eternal ages? Can we travel back in thought, searching for a beginning, and think we perceive duration without limits? Or, shall we look forward to being without end, and think we see its boundlessness? If we can do this, then may we conceive of one attribute of Him who has named himself, I AM. This is a self-existing property of which we know nothing. All other things hang upon God. He stands alone; the Beginning without beginning, and the Ending without end. The being of God is absolutely necessary, essential; were it not for this incomprehensible Being, every thing would fall to nought.

But, as has been observed, it is infinity that makes the attributes of God beyond the conception of the creature. A faint semblance of some of them we know; but it is not the full, the entire reality, as inherent in Jehovah, with which we are acquainted. It is something resembling very im-

perfectly that which is God's, but not the thing itself. If we think we can behold the excellencies of God, it is not God's excellencies that we behold. As nearly, however, as our finite minds are capable of realizing perfection so immense, to the soul in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, the sight is captivating. Where is there joy, to the renewed in heart, equal to the ineffable sweetness rising from the consideration of what GOD IS? What do his people desire God to be that he is not? And to have every wish gratified in the character of him who reigns supreme, and who has declared he will be ours beyond the possibility of change, is blessedness. Transporting thought! God is good,—a thought which only can be enchanced in value, by the reflection that we shall be like him. Desires he hath given, which he alone can satisfy; and one faculty that is bestowed on those in whom grace lives, is the power to apprehend the beauty of holiness. To this the inmost affections of the Christian are drawn. In comparison with this, nothing delights, nothing charms. To be a partaker of *God's holiness* would, and *will*, make the believer's heaven. Blessedness and holiness are as inseparably connected in his eyes, as they are in truth. His "senses are exercised to discern good and evil." He knows no satisfying portion but the perfection that is found in God, and the measure of it that is bestowed by God on man. He feels

that joy which endures, hath purity for its essence, and God for its author. Enjoyment, where the love of holiness is the source, hath no satiety; for the higher the attainment, the more intense is the longing after fuller communication. The soul that but tastes the chief good, feels that there is no other worth the coveting; and the oftener that the attempt has been made to derive satisfaction from the world and the creature, the more thorough is the conviction in the renewed mind, that from these it cannot flow. Such sources of support fail us when we resort to them. The joys of earth are empty and delusive, short-lived and unsatisfying. If we covet any thing, we must seek it where in reality it is found. No man seeks for gold in the ocean, or for pearls in the mines of Peru. And if we seek joy, we must derive it from Him in whom it dwells, in whom is its fountain. The perfections of God constitute his bliss; therefore, holiness is the very ground-work of happiness; and the nearer blessed spirits resemble God in holiness, the nearer they must resemble him in joyfulness. Joy is inherent in God, so it necessarily follows, that it can never exist in continuing, but by assimilation to him. If God is perfect, and God is happy, it cannot be otherwise than that happiness flows from perfection. To derive happiness from God, independently of assimilation to his other attributes, is impossible. It would be to sever what

cannot be disjoined,—blessedness from the character of Jehovah, or happiness *from what produces it.* It would be to affirm, that innate joy dwells not in the Supreme; for, from his attributes, from what he is in himself, the joy of God must arise. And if, in the heart of the Christian, the desire of holiness, and, in the smallest degree, the likeness of God are implanted, *that* is given which leads of itself to happiness. Holiness conduces as much to happiness, as life does to motion; whatever lives moves, and where there is true holiness, there is true happiness. The least approach to holiness is an approach to happiness, and fulness of holiness is fullness of happiness. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, *therefore,* God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Now that the people of God are destined to possess this fulness of happiness, is incontestibly proved by the love they bear to holiness. The delight which is *given* them in immaculate purity, is the strongest possible evidence, that the design of the Almighty is to make them perfectly pure. They have received a new nature, the principle feature of which is, a desire that is not to be controlled,—the desire of holiness. If this desire is never to be gratified, it is a solitary instance in Providence, and contrary to the whole divine procedure. Our globe teems with life, and we find that all the crea-

tures which inhabit it, obtain what they require, and naturally seek; that what they covet they are placed in circumstances to possess. Do we require breath?—the air supplies it. Are food, and drink, and warmth necessary?—the animals and the elements furnish them. Man, and all that lives, in a countless variety of species, have their wants provided for; and every craving of nature has a suitable provision ready for its relief. The world is clothed with verdure for the many creatures who feed upon it. The bee seeks honey, and the flowers provide it. The inhabitants of the waters find life in them; while other classes, to whom they are death, and who naturally dread them, occupy the dry land. Thus, all are supplied with that which they by nature desire; what they seek they find.

And shall the desire of holiness be the first deviation from what appears to be the general rule in Providence? Shall this desire, which we have not originally, but which is implanted by the Spirit of God, be given us, without the intention that it shall be satisfied?—thus making a meetness for heaven productive of hell; for an earnest longing after that which is unattainable, may be compared to the worm that never dies. Sorrow, and sighing, and eternal torment must ensue, were a wish so strong constantly ungratified. Desire, without the possibility of gratification, is of hellish growth;

through mercy, (as has been observed,) it is not the product of earth, nor is it known in heaven. But, in the world of wo, what wish *can* be gratified?—for the miserable inhabitants eagerly pursue after that which God hates. And here another argument opens, to prove that the desire of holiness shall be abundantly satisfied,—it is that in which God most especially *delights*. Its brightest effulgence is peculiar to the Deity. It is "He that is holy in *all* his works;"* "there is *none* holy as the Lord;"† from Him holiness emanates. Now, the Christian who finds his joy in holiness, is of one mind with the Eternal. His heart is set upon the same object in which Jehovah glories. He acts, or would act, in concert with God. What is pleasing to God is pleasing to him. His eyes are opened to behold incomparable beauty, where, in truth, it exists—in the character of God. He sees the Supreme Good glorious in holiness, and he desires to resemble, in as far as it is possible, excellency thus divine. Therefore, God and the creature are at one,—are agreed. There is no longer schism, opposition, variance; but harmony, concord, union. And if united in purpose and in love to the Omnipotent, what shall impede the believer's assimilation to him? where is the obstacle? what the hindrance? Man's renovation is impeded

* Psalms cxlv. 17. † 1 Samuel ii. 2.

by his will being adverse to God's; but here the will and the affections are gained, are in unison with the attributes of the Most High; and where, *then*, is the impediment to his obtaining that which God wills, equally with himself. God necessarily promotes that in which he delights, and he will fulfil the desires he hath implanted.

"When men cast seed into the ground, and sleep and rise night and day, the seed springeth and groweth up they know not how; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in ear." And thus it is in the kingdom of God; that which is sown germinates. As "the earth bringeth forth fruit of itself," so this good seed springeth up unto everlasting life. He that soweth, "blesseth the springing thereof." What should blight it?—Satan and his emissaries are alone inimical to its growth, and they have not the power. They may sow tares among the wheat, but the wheat *shall* grow until the harvest; for therefore was the seed deposited.

We see that ripeness or full stature is not attained in animal or vegetable life at once, or when first brought into being. It is the manner of Providence that maturity should succeed to infancy. Immense is the difference between the sapling and the majestic oak; and great is the dissimilarity between the infant and the man of genius and of letters. The body grows, and the soul increases

in understanding and in wisdom; and there is progression generally in our world. And shall the seed of grace wither and die, because the Almighty wills not to bless it? It springs not from earth, it is not the product of the soil. It comes from God, and leads to God. We may reverently say it is the most congenial to God of all that is beneath the sun; "for it is the divine nature implanted in man."*

And shall this that is the most noble, the most eminent of his works, with which we are acquainted,—this emanation from the Deity,—this in which he takes more especial delight,—the growth of holiness in the human soul, be abandoned by him? Shall *this* seed perish, when God giveth a body to *all* grain, it may chance of wheat or some other? It is an impossibility. The desire of holiness in the heart of man will terminate in its full fruition; it is God's work, and who shall let it? To him who seeks it, shall be given plenitude of holiness; and consequent on plenitude of holiness, is plenitude of joyfulness.

And now, we are naturally led to inquire, do we know any thing of happiness in connection with holiness? Are holiness and happiness assimilated in our minds? Does holiness appear to us productive of happiness? Can we conceive of hap-

*2 Peter i. 4.

piness separately from holiness, or does sin seem to us the plant on which enjoyment grows? Were we perfectly holy, do we feel that we should be perfectly happy? Thus it is with those in whom even the first fruits of holiness are found. The mist of worldly error which blinds the multitude, is from their eyes dispelled. They can appreciate the beauty of holiness; they can conceive that peace and joy flow from purity; they can feel that in holiness joy inherently dwells.

But again, how are we affected towards holiness in its infinitude, as it is found in God? Are we charmed with the lustre of Jehovah's glorious attributes? While, like the light of the sun, their radiance dazzles, so that we are unable to gaze on their brightness, which it is not in mortals to comprehend, do we delight to catch a glance of their unutterable loveliness, and is it to us a sight the most captivating that heaven itself can discover? Thus, too, it is with those in whom the Spirit dwells. God is their all; when unable to view him through the intercepting clouds of ignorance or sin, they mourn; for, in adoration their most precious moments are spent; when, by a realizing apprehension, the glories of the Divinity are faintly discoverable, they rejoice; for but a ray of light dispels gloom; and when faith pierces within the veil, and the attributes of God are more plainly discerned, they triumph; for joy rises in propor-

tion to the sight they obtain of his ineffable perfections. "The children of Zion are joyful in their King."

It is sweet to know that perfection exists; that there *is* such a thing as spotless purity; that one Being is essentially, eternally holy. It is sweeter to know that this Being reigns; that he is Supreme; that he is God over all; that all things are under his control, are under his feet. But it is sweetest to think that this God, this high, this holy God, will be our God; that we are united to him in indissoluble bonds for ever;—this is the climax of the Christian's joy. When he can realize this, it is joy unspeakable; to the world, incomprehensible! This is the joy of heaven, for there "we shall see him as he is." And there no cloud can intercept the sight of him who reigns immaculately holy. There the Christian's relationship to God shall be evident; it shall be seen, it shall be felt, that God and his saints are united. "That they may be one with us,"* was the great design the Redeemer had in view, when he gave himself a sacrifice for sin. On earth this union is accomplished, but in heaven it is apparent; and it shall be productive of unutterable blessedness to them who have learned to prize God's holiness.

That they may resemble God, and delight in

* John xvii. 21.

God, is the design of the Almighty, when sinners are regenerated by his grace. This *is* regeneration, the effect produced by the in-dwelling of the Spirit,—an effect at once ennobling and enrapturing. What so noble as to bear a resemblance, however faint, to the perfection of the Highest? What so rapturous as to partake of that which constitutes God's happiness?

From these observations, we may gather how inconceivable is the bliss of heaven! How little do we know of the joy that arises from nearness to, and intercourse with, God? How unable are we to realize the feeling of complete exemption from the bondage of corruption! or the delight which perfect purity imparts! These are among the things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." But again, we ask, have we any conception that these blessings are desirable? Does it appear to us that joy can accompany them, and that without them there is no true joy? Feelings such as these are forerunners of interminable blessedness. There must be a preparation of the heart ere blessedness can find admission. In our natural state, we are disqualified to receive it; we are incapacitated to experience joy. In the world's joy is sorrow, is misery, is death; and therefore, it deserves not the name. The ability to taste

true joy is bestowed by God on his people, and certainly and invariably terminates in its fulness. And where holiness charms, joy in its fulness may, and shall be tasted.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPACITY TO TASTE JOY.

Chief distinction between the worldly and religious—The soul must be formed for happiness ere it can receive it—Joy in God alone satisfying—Men of the world incapacitated to taste joy—This incapacity tends to, and is a capacity for, misery—Consolatory thought to believers—Capacity for joy may be given where, for a time, little joy is experienced—This state seldom of long continuance—Christians should exert their capacity to taste joy—Affecting state of those who are destitute of it—It should be sought—Essential of true joy.

"Should fate command me to the farthest verge
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to song; 'tis nought to me;
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full;
And where He vital breathes there must be joy."

HAVING considered the Christian as in a state of warfare with evil propensities, and as born from above to delight in holiness, it becomes apparent that the distinction between the people of the world and the children of God's kingdom, is no slight, superficial, outward semblance; no observance of rites or ceremonies; nothing that is trivial or unimportant. It is not even the conduct that forms the chief difference between these classes; it is the

peculiar properties of the heart that distinguishes them, whence the tenor of the life naturally flows. All men act according to the feelings that influence them. We do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles; wherefore, by their fruits we know them. But as the heart alone forms the character, a change in any man, to be radical and durable, must be there; and it is thence that every effect in the life emanates.

The removal of that distance and estrangement from God, or, it may more properly be termed, aversion to him, which in the unrenewed is universal, combined with union of soul, and assimilation to the Deity, is the very essence of that change which the spirit of God effects. And one of its chief peculiarities is a capacity to taste joy.

It is not sufficiently considered that the soul must be formed for happiness, before happiness can be bestowed upon the soul. Place a man in a situation of much enjoyment to others, if he has no delight in what affords it to them, he will experience none. Therefore, the capacity to receive joy is an essential preliminary to its existence. There are many things that afford enjoyment to man in his fallen state, and from which he can derive it, which, nevertheless, yield no true joy. To induce joy there must be the idea, false or true, that good is attained, or likely to be so. If that which promises, or may for the time yield enjoyment, is not true

good, the joy will inevitably cease, and therefore does not deserve the name. Joy, to be full, must be stable, must be satisfying, must be without end; and of this joy there is but one origin; there is one spring only of unspeakable blessedness—joy in God; not in his gifts, but in HIMSELF. "*I am* thy shield, and thy *exceeding great reward*," is the language of Jehovah to his believing people. Joy, in its infinitude, is founded on the possession of what is felt to be the highest good. That boundlessness of perfection dwells in God none will deny. Where else shall we find it if not in its origin, in the great First Cause of all that is good in the creation! Here, there is a beauty, that even to contemplate shall be joyful. And when this source of all excellencies is united to *us* in the closest ties of affinity and of affection, so that we are said to be *one* with him, partaking of his love, and of his glory,* joy is the unfailing result, according to the measure in which we can realize a portion so inexpressibly precious. Thus, that which gives true joy, must, in its nature, be calculated to bless.

There is no affection that imparts transport to the soul so amply as love, when it is fully warranted by the qualities of the object beloved, and when it is largely returned. If, then, our love is fixed upon God, according to the degree in which we are

* John. xvii. 22 23.

enabled to see, by faith, our interest in him, and that, wonderful as it may appear, his love is bestowed upon us, must joy arise. And infinite joy can only proceed from the knowledge that a Being of infinite excellence, and unbounded perfection, is ours, to bless, to ennoble, to enrich, to purify, eternally!

There is but one species of joy, then, thus durable, thus giving rest to the soul; and if we have no capacity to receive it, we cannot know what happiness is. If joy is unconnected with this highest good, it is fallacious; it is not true joy; it is from a failing source, which never can gratify in perpetuity.

And thus it is with men of the world. Their conceptions of what affords joy are diversified according to their various tastes, properties, and situations in life; but they have no pleasure in that which constitutes the joy of heaven, and no conception that the fountain of joy is in God, or that holiness charms. The blind are not more incapacitated to see, or the deaf to hear, than the world's votaries are to experience unspeakable blessedness. It is that for which they are without a sense; they are destitute of all that awakens it; they are filled with what is inimical to it; they are without the perception that it can exist.

Tell a man born blind how lovely is the blush of the rose, the tints of the carnation, or the

colours of the rainbow, and he is no wiser; he has no conception what is meant; he is without the faculty to comprehend what he is told. Or, strive to enforce upon a man who was born deaf, that sounds enchant, that music charms, and that harmony delights, he may be made to understand that you have a sense from which he is shut out, but he is not informed in what that sense consists; all he knows is, that you feel differently, and that he is unable to experience pleasure from that which imparts it to others.

And endeavour to instruct the worldly in the nature of heaven's joy, like the blind and the deaf, they have no ability to comprehend it. With difficulty they are persuaded that any human being can experience joy in God alone; yet, should the testimony of the godly convince them that the genuine disciples of Christ are joyous in proportion as they approach the source of true joy, they are free to confess that it is not so with them; that they are destitute of the faculty to receive this joy; that they are without the sense which feels it.

Now, this destitution of capacity to feel happiness in its fullest measure, of itself leads to misery. Where light cannot enter, there is darkness; where the harmony of sound is shut out, there is the stillness of death. Happiness and misery are opposed to each other; if the one gains entrance, the other retreats; if joy be present, grief is absent. And

as perfect love casteth out fear, so perfect joy casteth out sorrow. In their plenitude they cannot exist together; wherefore, the absence of joys tends to wretchedness.

But not only so, where there is no capacity to admit joy, there *is* a capacity for misery. If there is no desire after communion with God, there is a desire to depart from him; and in a departure from God consists misery. Joy, as a radiance, encircles the Deity; the nearer to its centre the fuller is the perception of joyfulness; and misery is proportionably increased as we recede from it. Wherefore, to quit the confines of joy is to enter the bounds of misery; and if the desire of distance from true joy be present, so will those desires which tend to wretchedness. It has been noticed, that the pleasures of the world, from repetition, cloy, and pall upon the vitiated taste that seeks them still, because it knows no higher. Yet, on the supposition that they were capable of affording gratification during life, this counterfeit of real enjoyment must end with it, when an endless duration of misery is the inevitable result. Thus, connected with the incapacity to receive joy, is the capacity to endure misery.

An equal susceptibility of joy and sorrow cannot be balanced in the same breast; a tendency to one will preponderate; and where the preponderance lies, the effect will be to counteract the other; and

finally, as a necessary consequence, to exterminate it altogether. As fire and water extinguish each other, so do joy and sorrow; they each root out the counteracting principle; as the one advances, the other departs.

And here a thought naturally arises, which cannot fail of being consolatory to the genuine believer in Christ. If the worldly are disqualified to admit joy, so are the children of God to entertain sorrow; it spontaneously flies from them. Their hearts are destined to be *filled* with joy, and there shall be no room to admit grief. They shall uninterruptedly receive joy from its fountain, their eternal portion, Jehovah Himself; and associated with its fulness, sorrow cannot live; there is no space left by which it may enter. In this earth, it is true, there are sources of disquietude that mar the Christian's joy; but the reason is plain, his highest good has not fully taken possession of the soul; therefore, there is still place for grief. And so with the worldly; they have, at times, while here, what they deem pleasure; for the misery to which they tend is not full, and their gratifications, such as they may be, also find scope. But as the Christian is susceptible of, and shall possess, the truest and purest joy, so the worldly are susceptible of, and shall inherit, the deepest sorrow. When joy or misery gains full admission into the heart, they each cast out the opposing principle for ever.

It may, however, be necessary to remark, that the capacity of which we treat is frequently given, where, nevertheless, little joyfulness is for a time experienced. Many reasons may be assigned why it is so; and one seems evident, it is the joy of heaven that believers are capacitated to entertain; and therefore it is not to be expected that they shall fully possess it while upon earth. The excess of heaven's joy is peculiar to heaven, as it arises from union with, and nearness to, God, which *there* is uninterrupted and apparent; whereas, in this land of exile, faith in their relationship to God, and in their interest in his love, is chiefly that which gladdens the hearts of his children.

The weakness of faith, then, is another reason why believers do not at all times rejoice. The disciples of Jesus who in this world possess most joy, are those in whom faith most abounds; and in proportion to the cordiality with which the record of God concerning a full and a free salvation, through Immanuel's costly sacrifice, is received, will be the measure of the Christian's joy. If a doubt arises of his interest in this salvation, joy must abate; if he can fearlessly exclaim, "my beloved is mine, and I am his," joy will with equal certainty be his portion. "It is *believing* that he rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

But there are periods when the conceptions the believer may entertain of the beauty and excellency

of his King are more than usually faint, and at such times he will be less joyful. Darkness, while on earth, rests upon the minds even of the favoured few who are capable of delight in God; they are fitted for, and shall enjoy, the beatific vision, but it is not present with them. At some seasons this darkness is more dense, the horizon is obscured, the sun is not even seen behind a cloud, he is altogether eclipsed, and joy is lessened. The capacity to entertain it, is unimpaired; but the object that excites it, the perfections of the divine character, is with diminished clearness beheld. Still, believers are equally capable of receiving even its fulness, but that which induces it, the beauties of their King, is not to their mind's eye present. A single glance would awaken it, and in proportion to the view obtained would be the delight experienced; but, for a period they may have little realizing conception of that whence their joy arises.

At such seasons, however, comfort is afforded by the belief the Christian entertains that the attributes of his King are unspeakably glorious, and cannot shine brighter! With this he rests satisfied, waiting for those joyous communications of the Spirit, which, bringing life with them, manifest God to the soul. And, "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him," is the language of that heart which seeks its joy in a God that hideth himself. "He that loveth me, said Jesus, shall be loved of

my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him," and this manifestation creates the Christian's joy.

It is not, however, generally, for any lengthened period, that those who are thus empowered to taste true joy walk in darkness, and see no light. The new nature in Christ is formed to have its senses exercised. That quality which can taste joy is not given to lie dormant; it is bestowed to bless the recipient of it; and, like the desire of holiness, is an effect produced by the Spirit of God, with the intention that the faculty should be gratified and employed. God is not so prodigal of his workmanship as to give any sense to man that is useless to him. All our senses are unfailingly productive of benefit to us, and answer the end designed. And where the capacity to joy in God is found, the end in view, undoubtedly is, that we may rejoice in Him. This is the merciful intention of Jehovah; and while He lives and reigns, the joy of those who derive their happiness from himself is secure. It may be interrupted for a time, but the sense being given is a pledge that it shall be exercised.

On earth, indeed, there is no fulness of joy, even in those who are the best qualified to receive it. The joy of the Christian is greater than other men know; but it is not uninterrupted, nor does capacity alone limit it. Joy like this is peculiar to

heaven; *there* all shall experience whatever bliss their natures are capable of receiving; there shall be no limitation but the capacity to contain more; the joy of all shall be full. In that land of light and blessedness, God is clearly manifested. The glory and honour of his perfections are seen in a manner that to us, while here, is incomprehensible. How infinitely His greatness and His beauty excel those of all created intelligences becomes apparent! And to those who have learned to place their joy in what He is, delight is consequent on the clearer discovery of it. The image of God is reflected in those who thus behold Him: purity and felicity are the result of this vision of their essence, and the homage of the heart seeks its gratification in unceasing worship and service.

But, Christian, if the capacity to joy in God is given that it may be exercised, is it your endeavour to exert it? There is no prodigal waste of divine bounty; every sense is bestowed with the design that it should be used. Privileged to partake of heaven's bliss, feeling an inexpressible void when God is absent, which nothing else can supply, be yet more anxiously desirous to drink deeper of this fountain of blessedness. Seek with increased fervency the Spirit's influence that delightfully manifests God to the soul, and let no created good, even for a time, divert your thoughts from Him in whom your joy is found.

There are reasons, we have seen, that may occasion to the believer an abatement of joy; such as darkness and weakness of faith, or from divine grace being less amply communicated; but the same effect may proceed from the misimprovement of that grace which has been imparted. It is possible that those who are capacitated to taste true blessedness may neglect the gift that is in them, and fail in the unceasing endeavour to draw living water out of the wells of salvation. If the thoughts are suffered, in a season of temptation, to be absorbed in earthly things, our highest joy may still be in God, but it will not be felt to be so. The sense may remain unimpaired, but it will be unemployed and unimproved. Joy can spring from nothing unless we contemplate it; no sense can gratify unless we use it. The loveliest object cannot charm if the eyes be shut, nor can melody enchant if we stop our ears, nor can God himself delight if not in all our thoughts.

Wherefore, Christian! to whom is given the sense to taste joy, use it. Behold by faith the glories of that Divine Being, the plenitude of whose perfections, combined with his relationship to you, form your bliss. Take the spiritual light which He has bestowed upon you, and by the aid of his grace seek, as for hid treasure, after the knowledge of the Highest. Be not contented with a superficial glance, but let the thickly clustered excellencies

of Jehovah be your search, for to know Him is life eternal. See the sufficiency that there is in God for the creature's life and happiness. Contemplate the divine character, till joy be full. Let His word direct the inquiry. Ponder well what is written of each of his attributes, till something of the meaning of their weight and amplitude be conceived. You *have* the ability to rejoice in them; exert it. See their brightness rendered visible to human eyes in the man Christ Jesus. Behold all the perfections of the Deity in the garb of human flesh, and say if the contemplation be not sweet: if it be not joyful to muse on the power and the love, the truth and the justice, the wisdom and the goodness of Him, who was an infant of days, and the mighty God; the everlasting Father, and our elder Brother.

Let no causes, therefore, of darkness and distress disquiet you; with Christ you are rich for eternity! And if through manifold temptations you may have been in heaviness, let your tears cease, for GOD LIVES. And while God is, and you can delight yourself in Him, your happiness is secure. It is His will that you should derive it from his fulness, otherwise he would not have enabled you to do so. This sense is a gift; all men have it not. "I *create* Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." The ills of time shall swiftly

vanish, but *God is*. "I AM is his memorial unto all generations."

The consideration of this interesting subject, the believer's joy in God, induces the conviction that those in whose hearts this joy has no place, are in a state truly pitiable. Oh! that their own minds were duly affected by their melancholy condition! Misery is the portion they have chosen; towards its *fulness* they advance by rapid strides, leaving joy behind them, as that which they desire not, and from which they farther and farther recede. The barrier to their tasting it is not that it is withheld from them, but that they are incapacitated to partake of it, resembling the instances alluded to, where the eye or the ear being defective, infallibly excludes sight and hearing. Our Lord himself says of such persons, that they *cannot* see the kingdom of God.* They are disqualified, they are unfitted to enjoy the heavenly felicity. And where joy is thus shut out, sorrow shall pour in as a flood against the incursions of which there is no defence, and where the ground unoccupied shall leave abundant room for its entrance.

If there are any who feel the truth of these statements, who know their incapacity to taste the joy of heaven, who see the misery to which they are consequently exposed, and who are ready with

* John iii. 3.

earnestness to inquire, "what then shall we do to recover from a condition thus hopeless?" we would refer them to the subject of the preceeding chapter. To such inquirers it is no matter of doubt whether the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit be necessary. They are fully aware that, unless they are born again, in the emphatic language of Scripture, they perish. It is the Spirit of God alone that gives the capacity to partake of heavenly blessedness. All mankind are by nature dead to joy in God, and all who are susceptible of delight in the contemplation of what God is, and in communion with Him, receive the faculty thus to rejoice, by the gift of the Holy Ghost. And the capacity to taste fulness of joy, and the blessedness which as surely results from this capacity, as the sensations results from the structure of the body, depend entirely on the influences of the Spirit.

It is therefore evident that if this faculty be a gift, we must seek it from Him whose it is to bestow. Inexpressibly valuable as are those communications, without which joy in its greatest extent cannot find access to the heart of man, they are unfailingly given where they are sought. "Ask, and ye shall receive," is the encouraging assurance of truth itself; and God is as able as he is willing, "to make all grace abound towards you."

There is an essential requisite to true blessed-

ness, which is frequently not kept in view, that we delight in that which has no tendency to cease, but will last for ever. All sources of joy shall fail, with the exception of joy in God; this alone endures. It lives in the soul an unceasing fountain of bliss throughout endless ages. If we have an ability to joy in God, he gave it. If we delight in him, it is because he hath delight in us, and wills our joy, and therefore no circumstance can rob us of it. When the naked soul, dislodged from the body, shall find itself bereft of every thing here, and without one earthly prop upon which to lean; yea, when the world and all the many tribes which animate it shall be burnt up; when Nature's laws shall fail, the sun be darkened, and the moon not give her light; or, should even the universe be extinct; still joy, abundant joy, Christian! is found for you, while God lives. You seek no other portion, and your portion is immutable, and therefore immutable is your joy. Oh! the stability of that bliss which flows from God, and the joy, the unutterable joy, of him in whom is the capacity to taste it! In that soul heaven is begun, and heaven is secure forever!

CHAPTER X.

CHRISTIAN GRACES GIVEN TO BE USED.

All God's works manifestly with design—Design in the formation of the new man in Christ Jesus—Diligently to employ their talents, pressed upon Christians—Such as love, trust, abasement, ability to pray, to praise, to endure, to labour, to fight—By nature destitute of them all—Gift of Holy Spirit unspeakably valuable, and given to be exhibited to the praise of God's grace.

"The soul on earth is an immortal guest,
Compell'd to starve at an unreal feast:
A spark that upwards tends by Nature's force,
A stream diverted from its parent source,
A drop dissever'd from the boundless sea,
A moment parted from eternity!
A pilgrim panting for a rest to come,
An exile anxious for his native home."

In the last chapter the ideas have been suggested, that the soul of man, when born again of the Spirit, and renewed by the Holy Ghost, receives a capacity to taste joy, of which, by nature, we are not possessed; and that this capacity is given with the design that it may be used. These remarks equally apply to all the sensations and affections of the soul when created anew in Christ Jesus: they are gifts,—they are given to be employed by us

Every thing that God hath wrought is manifestly with design. There is no member of the body that is not exactly fitted for its intended purpose, and does not promote our comfort by its use. Divine skill and intention are evident in all God's works; and the structure of the largest and of the minutest animal alike mark them. The huge proboscis of the elephant is formed that its strength may be exerted; and fibres belonging to living creatures, that are invisible to our sight, excepting by the aid of the microscope, are bestowed for their benefit. There is design in all the organs of countless myriads of animalculæ. They propel themselves by the instruments of motion which are given them; and although provided with organs so small as to be imperceptible to man's eye, their limbs, and their lungs, and their mouths, are as valuable to them as ours are to us. Every component part of each individual creature is made to perform some function. There is no prodigality of the Divine workmanship,—no organ, of any thing that lives, which is useless,—nothing is made in vain.

The vegetable creation is likewise manifestly, and in an equal measure, formed with skill and with design. Its beauty, its variety, its multiplicity, are evidently intended to regale the senses, and to minister to the necessities of man, of insect, and of beast. One of our senses is charmed by the verdure of plants, by their majestic stateliness,

and by the brilliancy and loveliness of their hues; and another sense derives satisfaction from a class that are equally nutritious and grateful; while a third is delighted by the fragrance which enriches not a few of the most delicate of the vegetable tribes. Some are medicinal, and for this end are formed; and all are intended to perpetuate their species, and never fail to do so. Thus God works with design, and the accomplishment of that design is equally from his operation; and wherever a quality is given by God that tends to any effect, there too will the effect be given which that quality is designed to produce.

And the new man in Christ Jesus, equally with all the other works of God, is formed with design. Is there not a purpose when the Spirit powerfully rests upon the soul, when the faculties are renewed, when the affections are transformed, when the slave of sin is made to hate it, and the hater of God's law to love it? Such a work as this is surely not in vain. The hand of God in it is visible, and it is apparent that there is design in an operation thus marvellous. It must be so; and the more wonderful the means, we may confidently affirm, the greater will be the effect that by them is intended to be accomplished. And what is the plan in the Divine counsel when the Holy Ghost operates on the heart of man?—The intention of the Almighty is, that he may be glorified in his creature; that

men may bear the image of the Eternal; that ten thousand times ten thousand of the descendants of Adam may surround the throne of God for ever! The means by which this end is brought to pass, are not fortuitous, they are with design, and they accomplish that design. It is God's work which is and shall be perfect, nor shall it cease until it be completed.

What we would therefore press upon the consideration of the disciples of Jesus, from these reflections, is, that they diligently employ the talents and graces their God hath given them. Are they enabled to taste joy? let them make the most of a capacity thus enviable. Or, are the abilities given them to love, to trust, to hope, to endure, to be abased, to forgive, to pray, to praise, to work, to fight, to use the shield of faith, to overcome the fiery darts of the wicked one?—these, and every other affection and capacity of the renewed soul, are gifts, and the intention of the Most High, in the bestowal of them, is that they may be used.

Christian! you can love—the world at large cannot. The affection which they feel for others centres in self. It is not the principle that expands, that blesses far as the influence of Him in whom it dwells, can reach. It is not *that* love which is an emanation from the Deity, which draws the soul in closest bonds towards Himself, and thence extends its kindly regards to all mankind. It is

not that diffusive principle which "is twice blessed," blessing him who feels it, and them for whom it is felt. *This* love is a gift implanted in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and it is given that its energies may adorn the character, and that, through its medium, blessings may descend from the Eternal; that it may not lie dormant, but be used. Wherefore, believing soul, abound in love! Love fervently, love constantly, love eminently. Love Him whose essence is Love, and in him love his creatures. Love your kindred, love your enemies, love saints, love angels, love strangers, love aliens. "Be rooted and grounded in love." Let all enmity cease. Let universal charity prevail. Begin the life of heaven, which is everlasting love!

Or, believer in Jesus, you feel that you can trust; that there is a Rock upon which you lean; that other dependencies you neither have nor can have; that every prop besides breaks beneath your weight; that this one *alone* is stable, is sure, and you know that you have the ability to lean upon it. If you recline to the right or to the left your stay is lost; but fully confiding the entire pressure upon the Rock, you remain firm, undaunted, immoveable! You see the many around you lean on broken reeds, and one after another fall headlong; or, they try to support their own weight, fearful of trusting it to Omnipotence, and they find that stand they cannot. And these have no ability to rest on

the Rock, while their dependence is placed on something else. But, believer, the ability is thine, wherefore, use it. Trust the soul naked, impure, stained with sin, helpless, on that "Arm which hath awoke, put on strength, wounded the dragon, and made the depth of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over." Trust implicitly that in this reliance the soul is safe,—that it cannot finally fall while it thus leans,—that it shall be purified, ennobled, glorified! And trust the body,—this poor, frail, decaying, dying body,—trust it to Him who took part of the same, who was partaker of flesh and blood, and who took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses. Is the body, then, diseased, infirm, waxing old, nigh to that state where it shall be a prey to worms? trust it to Him, who, although worms should destroy it, is the resurrection and the life, by whose power it shall arise a glorious body, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Believe that it shall bear the image of the Lord from heaven; that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; that death shall be swallowed up in victory! Or, Christian, do cares and sorrows press as you journey through life, so that the songs of Zion are unsung, while your harp hangs upon the willows? Does refuge seem to fail, and all look dark around? "Be not faithless but believing." Now is your time to trust. Faith must have that

which is *unseen* upon which to build its reliance. It grows and lives upon desertion, trial, and need. Then we feel its reality—its power. It is in circumstances of distress that the Christian clings the closest to his stronghold, and that faith pierces the veil, "the evidence of things not seen." You *have* trusted and been delivered, wherefore, trust now. Your God hath helped hitherto, and he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." You have the ability to trust, let fear be banished. All shall be well, believe it. Exert the confidence in God which he has given you, that in him whatever concerns you is safe. "Trust in him at all times," henceforth, and for ever.

Or, believer, are you abased? Can you sensibly feel humiliation? Do you see your vileness, your sinfulness, your emptiness, your nothingness? Do you "know that in you, that is in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing?" This, too, is a gift, bestowed in various degrees upon the children of God, but whatever be its extent, it is given that it may be cultivated. Make, therefore, the most of this precious knowledge, for it is no false apprehension of unworthiness that you experience, it is but the knowledge of the truth, and it is a knowledge of which the mere professor is destitute. The discovery is highly to be prized, for it leads a lost soul to embrace a free salvation; it leads them who have nothing, to accept of imperishable riches,

and to cleave to the sufficiency of Him who hath all things. Are you, then, emptied of self-exalting thoughts, humbled, laid prostrate, and very low? Seek not to rise,—lie thus abject,—if it be possible, lie lower still. Glory in your infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon you. Rejoice in his fulness. Be content with your poverty, that the praise of the glory of Christ's grace may be more abundant. Strive to grow in deeper consciousness of your guilt, and to improve the gift of a broken and contrite spirit which you have received.

Or, disciple of Jesus, have you learned to pray? Is the ability given you to lift up your heart to God? Can you commune with God "as a man speaketh unto his friend?" Are your secret thoughts laid open, are your sins and your sorrows spread before God? Are your desires confided, are your cares intrusted to this Almighty, this unfailing Friend? By nature, you had lost communion with God; have you found it by grace? You had no power when unrenewed to come into his presence, you were alienated from him, you could not reach his throne. Whence, then, proceed these strong cryings and groans that pierce the heavens,—whence these heart-felt aspirations that enter in within the veil? They come from God and lead to God. They are bestowed upon the little flock for whom Christ died. They are not

the natural breathings of the heart of unrenewed man.

It is the soul that prayeth, the body profiteth nothing. Prayer consisteth not in the bended knee or in words, but in the intensity of the desire for that for which we pray. And can you, Christian, earnestly desire and entreat for the best gifts? This is of the fruit of the Spirit; this is of the water of life, which rises to the height whence it sprung. And, having the power to pray, Oh! use it freely. "Pray without ceasing,—pray every where,—continue instant in prayer, give yourself continually to prayer, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Be thankful that a gift, which is the breath, the nutriment of the soul, is imparted to you, and let it not languish for want of use. Amidst the ordinary business of life, and when the turmoil, and care, and varied and multiplied avocations of the world press, still pray. Let not the power to lift up the heart in ardent supplication be given you, without the constant ascension of the heart being your unwearied and blissful endeavour. There is no lack of matter for prayer. *In* every thing,—*for* every thing that you can conscientiously desire, pray. Dwell, as it were, in the presence of the Eternal. Let not prayer be your strange work, confined to times and seasons, but let God be your strong habitation, whereunto you continually resort.

Or, believing soul, you can praise. You have learned to adore Him, the infinitude of whose excellence exceedeth search. You can see excellency in the Supreme. You can view, although afar off, and very dimly, beauty in the fountain of all perfection, and your spirit rises in adoration, and your lips utter praise. You are compelled to extol, for praise is the language of your soul. It is your delight to break forth in fervent devotion. But a glimpse of what God is constrains you to praise ;—you cannot but praise. Can the incomparable fulness, the clustered glories of infinitude, be apprehended in *any* measure by the Christian without praise ? He who has learned, however inadequately, to prize them, is necessitated to adore, is compelled to magnify. The purer air of the celestial regions induces praise ; the believer catches, as it were, a zephyr from the element of heaven, and, with sympathetic but feeble accents, unites with the triumphant chorus of glorified spirits, who cease not to shout, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts ; the whole earth is full of his glory." And, although unable to reach the purity and the strength of their ecstatic worship, when thus engaged, an unity of soul is felt with all the excellence of the creation.

But praises no less fervent burst from your heart, when you remember what God hath done for you. The redemption of Christ calls forth your praise,

for you know that without it you were lost. You believe that His sufferings were not only to spare yours, but to change unending wailing and woe, into eternal hosannahs and joyfulness, and praise is your willing tribute for blessings thus unspeakably great, thus expensively obtained. When, by the Spirit's influence, you are enabled to feel that Christ truly *suffered;* that soul and body were agonized to the utmost; that the wrath of God rested upor Him, that it might not rest upon you, to free you from Satan's curse and Satan's sway; thanksgiving and praise spontaneously flow; you cry out "my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. He that is mighty hath done great things. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Thus, Christian, to praise, the spirit of praise is given you; and with it the power to breathe the atmosphere of heaven. Inhale a full draught of the salubrious air. Learn the language of that better country to which you are hastening; strive to speak it more unhesitatingly, more fluently. Abound in thanksgiving through the power of the Holy Ghost. "Offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of your lips, giving thanks to his name." "Bless the Lord at all times, let his praise be continually in your mouth."

Or, believer in Jesus, is patient endurance given you? Is there some burden that heavily presses,

which you carry without murmuring, which you bear without repining? You feel the load, you must feel it; stoical insensibility is not derived from Christianity. But with the sensation of weight, of oppression, is the spirit of entire resignation, or even of acquiescence, yours? Can you say, when suffering greatly, or when suffering at all, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?" Is God's will, whatever that be, your will? There is no grace more evidently a spiritual gift than this. Not one atom of satisfaction in the will of God, when it is distasteful to us, ever proceeded from the natural heart of fallen man. Resignation is quite opposed to our inclinations and natural feelings. It arises only from spiritual life. One will pervades heaven, and that will is God's; and when God's will, be it what it may, is desired on earth, the desire is of heavenly origin, and its implantation and its growth proceed from divine influence.

But, possibly, my Christian friend, you may be ready to say that you have not this desire, that when God inflicts suffering you bear it only because you must. You have no feelings of acquiescence, of willingness to carry the burden, the utmost you can do is to be resigned; and when you feel the pressure you incessantly and importunately cry for relief. Thus it may be, for never let it be forgotten, what is reiterated in this chapter, that all the graces of the Spirit are gifts, and gifts are not ne

cessarily ours, they depend on the pleasure of the donor. This grace may be only in embryo, and scarcely perceptible; and the trials you deplore may be sent to strengthen it. Yet if you think you have it not, pray for it. The cry for relief is not forbidden; but let the cry for patient endurance accompany it. You may pray for strength to bear suffering, or for its removal, but the choice of the alternative should not be yours; you must rest satisfied with the Divine will.

But *is* the grace patiently to endure given? Have you received it? Stint not then its exercise; God's glory is concerned in its use. Prove to all around you, that a suffering saint has sources of consolation of which the world knows not. Let tranquillity mark your demeanour; let a step higher still be your aim, even thanksgiving. Have you not yet enough to call forth praise, abundant praise? Are not all things that shall conduce to your real interest bestowed upon you while the redemption of Christ is yours, and the spirit of holiness is yours, and the heavenly inheritance yours? Oh! then, be patient under momentary suffering. The overwhelming and eternal good, which shall swallow up the short-lived and temporary evil, approaches. It may seem to advance slowly, but, nevertheless, it comes surely, and the weight of earth's sorrows shall be forgotten in the weight of heaven's joy.

But to you, believer, a sphere of extensive and laborious exertion may be allotted. To work zeal ously, prominently, unweariedly, may be the province your God hath chosen for you. Your mind may teem with plans for the propagation of the truth; and your days and years may be too few to accomplish all your heart would desire, and all in which your hands engage. You are at your post "in season and out of season, in weariness and watchings often, in labours more abundant." You find the wilderness of this earth overspread with thorns, and little ground cultivated; and while your arm retains its energy, and power from on High is given, you will do what in you lies, that in some spot at least, to which you have access, "the desert may rejoice and blossom as the rose, and that an highway may be there,—the way of holiness." Hail! beloved of the Lord; you are a fellow-worker with God. Think not your duties too arduous, for rest is nigh. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee:" work on, "bear the burden and heat of the day," for "the sleep of a labouring man is sweet." "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which you have showed towards his name." If in the ministry, "do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy min istry. And henceforth there is laid up for you a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the right eous judge shall give you."

But again, Christian, are you more especially called to encounter that conflict with sin and Satan, which has been noticed in a preceding chapter, and in which all Christ's disciples more or less engage? Do the fiery darts of the wicked one seem peculiarly levelled at you? Is the conflict between what you would be and what you are, fierce? Are you often well-nigh defeated—at times, peradventure, overcome? Yet still do you fight, and feel that you cannot yield, that defeat is worse than death? Let the recollection, that to maintain this warfare strength is given you, be well impressed upon your heart. Your province is, to contend and conquer; wherefore, means of defence are bestowed upon you. You cannot fight without weapons; and you have none until they are put into your hands. Your single arm would soon have been unnerved and the battle would long since have been lost, had you alone been engaged in it. No contest in your own strength is possible; instruments of resistance are furnished you, and your arms are made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. You have no power to subdue this great company; yet the victory is yours, for it is "God that girdeth thee with strength;" "He teacheth your hands to war, and your fingers to fight;" and it is "He that giveth salvation from the hurtful sword." Wherefore, meet your assailants undauntedly. You are not placed in the front of the battle by chance; God

designs this service for you; it is the post of honour. The Captain of your salvation has confidence in your valour. He intends that the armour he hath given you shall be used; that his gifts and his graces shall not lie dormant. Open your eyes and see, although an host compasseth the city, they that be with you are more than they that be with them. You have received the Spirit; employ his gifts "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Thus, believer in Jesus, it appears, that by nature you are destitute of every thing, in temper and disposition, that is truly good. Whatever distinguishes you from the wretched and the worldly, you have received, and nothing is given you to lie hidden and unemployed, but every gift is designed to be used. It becomes, therefore, an imperative duty, that each disciple of Christ should seriously inquire, what spiritual graces are in any degree bestowed upon him—and what use he is making of gifts so precious? We are no Christians, unless we enjoy in some measure the Spirit's influence. There are, we read, diversities of operations. To one is given the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge; to another faith. But "all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally, as he will." Yet, whatever be the gifts, let them appear; let them shine with a lustre that marks their heavenly origin. Be solicitous that the ends for which they were

bestowed should be accomplished, in the beauty of God's work being conspicuous where desolation and ruin dwelt, and in the blessing to your own soul, which they are calculated to impart, being more and more abundant. It is surely not arrogance to affirm, that satisfaction must arise to God himself, when the graces of his Spirit grow in his people, and when they employ to good account his gifts. If we bestow upon others what costs us much, we feel hurt that they cast it away as useless, and gratified if they appreciate its value, and use it frequently. And surely the gift of the Holy Spirit is unspeakably valuable, when there was but one adequate price—Immanuel's blood; and that high price God did not deem too extravagant to purchase it. And shall we who receive it freely not take the full benefit of the inestimable boon, by letting one end, for which it is given, be completely accomplished, in exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit in all their plenitude and beauty; by seeking to display the mind of the Lord to men in the exhibition of his graces. To you, Christians, is committed this gift of great price, not only to enrich yourselves, but to redound to the glory of God; and this you can only effect by the conspicuous development of the Christian character. Yet be not discouraged, if your attainments are hitherto small. Grace, like the grain, grows; and that which is but as the seed in you, may soon ripen

into the full corn in ear.* But in whatever degree you possess it, be it less or more, use it; exhibit its fruit, which, as derived from God, will be lovely even in its immature state, and when more advanced, luxuriant and beautiful. God never works with the view to have his work concealed; and we fall in most with the design of the Spirit in the great work of renovating the human soul, when we let nothing that he hath wrought in us sleep, but make the full use of the gifts he bestows. Thus shall we evince to the world, that "God hath chosen us to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit*, and belief of the truth."

* Mark iv. 28.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.

Natives of different Worlds—Trials of Christians in this World, as citizens of Heaven: accounted fools or madmen; small number of their countrymen; dread of contamination—These Trials prove their descent—Consolatory to know that their heavenly origin must remain—Impossible altogether to efface the identity of countrymen—The Spirit's seal equally uneffaceable—Inquietudes in the way to Heaven may well be borne—Evidence of citizenship in love of countrymen.

"As men who long in prison dwell,
With lamps that glimmer round their cell,
Whene'er their suff'ring years are run,
Spring forth to greet the glitt'ring sun:—
Such joy, tho' far transcending sense,
Have pious souls at parting hence:
On earth, and in the body plac'd
A few and evil years they waste;
But when their chains are cast aside,
See the bright scene unfolding wide,
Clap the glad wing, and tow'r away,
And mingle with the blaze of day."

From the cursory view that has been taken, in the beginning of this volume, of the maxims, manners, and feelings of the worldly, contrasted with what has been latterly stated, of the capacities, desires, and affections of the sincerely religious, it will appear, that these two classes are equally dis

tinguishable as if they were natives of separate worlds; what is the most satisfactory and desirable to the one, being quite the reverse to the other; and what is possible to the latter class, what those belonging to it are capable of, and formed for, being quite impossible, while they remain unchanged, to the former. It is true, that the nature of both these classes was originally the same; that their tendencies and dispositions were alike; and that, remaining unaltered, their pleasures and pursuits would have been similar. But the disciples of Christ have been made citizens of another and a better country; and, consequently, an entire renovation in the whole man has been effected, by which they are become new creatures, born again from above, and incapable of deriving their highest gratification from earth. Their grand distinctive property, in truth, is, that they belong to another world. They feel themselves, while here, but as strangers and sojourners; and their hopes, desires, and expectations, centre in a future state. They are as residents in a foreign land, where the customs, ideas and practices of the country are not congenial to them; and where they must likewise expect reproach and dislike, in as far as they do not conform to the general usages.

In this chapter, it is our intention to consider the Christian as the citizen of heaven, and in this light to inquire what trials and what consolations

he may anticipate as he journeys through this earth.

And, first, it is a trial to be accounted a fool or a madman; and this the Christian must anticipate, if his eyes are fixed on imperishable blessedness, and closed on surrounding vanities.* We readily admit, that what is unknown and unfelt is difficult to be conceived by us; and the world's votaries, having no knowledge of what they deem good, but that which is derived from earth, when they see an influence obtained over believers, strong as is *their* conviction of heaven's treasure, the inference the worldly universally draw is, that a prepossession, to them thus marvellous, must originate in folly,—that nothing but weakness in intellect, and fanaticism in idea, could generate a conduct so unaccountable. Thus they frequently brand with every epithet that denotes imbecility of mind, the disciple of Jesus.

There is something revolting to man in derision and scorn; and more especially so when conscious that it is undeserved. But the world's mockery must be borne, in consequence of the Christian having senses given him to discern what is hidden from the men of it. While his eye pierces the veil that conceals the land of light, and looks on wonders that are undiscoverable to others, is it

* Hos. ix. 7.

strange that they smile at what appears to them his delusion? This, then, is a trial the citizens of heaven endure; and well they may,—the benefit of their change of state is theirs, and the reality of folly rests with those who, from ignorance, affix the title of fool to believers, insensible that, in truth, they themselves merit it.

Another trial to the citizen of heaven, in this foreign land, is the small number of his countrymen that inhabit it. Amidst the multiplicity of all denominations of men who are around him, or with whom he holds converse, there are but a few in whose countenances or demeanour he can trace the bonds of country. These are but as speckled birds,—sufficiently rare to remind him of his distance from home, and his foreign extraction. It is trying to leave one class of society and enter another, and still not listen to accents that are familiar, or meet with congenial modes of thinking and acting,—to find in none a friendly aspect, or a kindly smile. Yet so it often is with the Christian. Pretension to religion is indeed common, and it is considered a lack of charity to doubt its truth; but it is the discriminating marks of countrymen the Christian longs to see, but fails to discern. The manners, appearances, language, features, habits, and enjoyments of the people with whom he dwells, are diversified; but they are not those of the citizens of his home! It matters not

from what country they claim descent, so long as they bear no resemblance to the inhabitants of his. The *claim* of lineage is of no avail, it is the *evidence* of affinity that affords solace and comfort to the traveller, when he meets with those whose demeanour can stand this test in a foreign clime. And these high-sounding pretenders to religion are in name Christians, but not in heart or in practice. Thus the believer often feels himself solitary and deserted in the world, and looks in vain for that sympathy and fellowship which refreshes and cheers.

But there is a trial that is more personal, which is experienced by the citizens of heaven, as they journey through this earth, which frequently wounds their spirits, and mars their comfort,—we allude to the dread they may entertain of being contaminated, in temper or habits, by the practices and manners of the many around them; or to the effects which intercourse with such may actually have produced. Wherein the danger lies, and how unwarily Christians may be beguiled into compliances at variance with the standard of duty, and unworthy of their high destiny, has been shown in our first chapters. Yet, that it is so, must ever be productive, in the mind of a believer, of self-inspection and self-reproach. He sighs to find an ally, Sin, within his breast, which inclines him to think lightly of deviations from the unerring

rule his God hath given him; and often he detects conformity to the world where, perhaps, he least imagined he had been guilty of it. Foreigners invariably imbibe somewhat of the ideas and fashions of the land in which they sojourn, even when the practices of their own country are infinitely preferable. It rarely happens that men receive no impression from surrounding objects; so the precept,—"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind," is of difficult attainment. And when, in any degree, worldliness in heart or life has crept upon the Christian, a cloud must, for the time, rest upon his spirit; for the ties of gratitude to his King, and of attachment to the laws of his country, are broken, and the cry is wrung from them,—"Oh! that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" It is, however comforting to know, that, placed in these ensnaring circumstances, the traveller to Zion possesses security that he shall not be permitted long to stray from the right path. The intercession of Christ, and the power of God, are his defence; and his fears may be hushed while the words of the Saviour remain indelibly written, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."

That these are trials is, however, undeniable; and it is likewise certain, that every traveller towards Zion must expect, in a greater or less degree, to meet with them. Have we, then, known any thing of their bitterness? Are we treated with contempt for the name of Jesus? Are we mourning for the general depravity, and grieved that so few with whom we converse bear testimony, by their tempers and lives, that they are numbered among Christ's genuine disciples? And are we jealous of ourselves, dreading to be enslaved by the opinions and customs of a world lying in wickedness, and sincerely afflicted if conscious that we have deviated, in practice, from the unerring rule of God's holy law? If this be our experience and character, there is consolation for us in the proof thus afforded that we *are* citizens of heaven. Trials such as these are the badge of our discipleship. No other denomination of men experience them,—none but Christ's little flock can feel them. None but the faithful followers of the Lamb endure the world's scorn for their adherence to his cause. None lament that darkness is around them, but those who have seen the light. Thus there is consolation blended with the trials that, as citizens of heaven, the people of God sustain.

But not only may this people find consolation in the certainty that they *are* the citizens of heaven, it is likewise most consolatory to know, that they

ever must be so,—that it is an impossibility to take from them their heavenly origin. We may live for a time distant from our home, and alienated from our native land, but, go where we please, our birth-place continues the same,—we cannot alter it. We *have* been born there, and that is our country; our absence from it may be protracted, our manners may even be corrupted by intercourse with other nations, but still citizens of our own country we must remain; and neither we ourselves nor any one else have power to alter our descent from this line of ancestry. We *are* of this stock, our extraction *is* from thence, and thus it shall continue to be.

Nor is it possible entirely to efface the identity of countrymen. We always mark something, in habit, utterance, or idea, that reminds us of the land of our fathers. Men of different nations never completely assimilate; nor do they lose their distinctive features, their natural preferences, and their national peculiarities; and foreign extraction may easily be traced in all who come from remote districts.

And so the citizens of heaven. Their new birth, being an act of the Most High, cannot be repealed. "Every one that is called by my name, I have created him for my glory; I have formed him, yea, I have made him." They have "passed, therefore, from death unto life." They inherit a

nature which is imperishable as that from which it is derived, and to which it is united,—even the nature of God himself. They have been born again of the Spirit; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; not like matter, liable to corruption and decay, but indissoluble, and of endless existence. Christ gives unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. And heirs of the inheritance of the saints in light they unalterably remain, even amidst the wreck of worlds.

And equally ineffaceable is the impress of that seal which the Spirit of God has stamped upon their souls. There are marks, not to be mistaken, which the children of God's kingdom bear, reminding us of their high origin and exalted destiny. There are peculiarities of language, of habit, and of idea, that never forsake them, into whatever society they may be thrown, or with whomsoever they may associate. They have preferences, aversions, joys, and griefs, that are distinguishing; and, in the company of the worldly, their foreign extraction may, without difficulty, be discerned. Their identity is visible in their zeal for the honour of their King, and their scrupulous endeavour to keep His laws. And His laws they do keep, although, in an unwary moment, and to their inexpressible sorrow, they may have been betrayed into the breach of any of them.

If, then, the kindred, the country, the origin, of this people, be abundantly evident, and not to be mistaken; and if it be certain that they not only are, but ever shall remain, citizens of the heavenly state, the New Jerusalem, let them not be too deeply affected by the inquietudes that may assail them, or the inconveniences they may meet with by the way. The land where you sojourn, Christian, or through which you must pass, as you journey heavenward, has not the equable temperament, or the salubrious air, of the climate of your own country; and your health may partly be impaired, and your usefulness impeded, in consequence; but you are on the road that leads to the land of uprightness; you travel onwards, and shall not greatly suffer ere you reach your home, where the atmosphere is healthful, and every breath pure. Or you are grieved that you meet with so few with whom you can hold fellowship,—who are of one heart and of one soul,—whose language and demeanour prove that they are of the peculiar people to whom you are united, in sympathy and affection. You rarely meet with those whose habits and sentiments are congenial; possibly your opinions, manners, and customs, excite the scorn and contempt of the many around you; and your endeavours to do them good are repaid only by hatred. It matters not; cheerfully bear the reproach of Jesus, "for here you have no continuing

city, but seek one to come." Your countrymen may be distant, but they are numerous and united; and it is with them you are destined to dwell. In your own land, union and sympathy are characteristic of the people; and what is deemed contemptible in your present abode, is, by the inhabitants of Zion, eminently and universally prized. "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: and as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Let the evidence of your citizenship be conspicuous. Be solicitous that all men may easily discern in you the marks that distinguish the citizens of heaven. Prove that your claim of lineage is undoubted. Let there be nothing to create suspicion, from your carriage or behaviour, that you are of other descent, or belong to another nation. Unequivocally show your subjugation to your King, and glory in the qualities that note your countrymen. "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." "Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life."

There is an evidence arising out of the remarks in the preceding pages, by which heaven's citizens may be known, and it is a very decisive test by which to judge whether we are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and belong to that better

country,—the regard we bear for the people of it. There is no surer sign that we have partaken of the grace of life, and are fellow-citizens of the saints, than if we delight in those whose hearts and conversation are in heaven. And if we can truly say that, in proportion to the proof they give, that the Spirit of God dwells in them, is the respect and love we entertain for God's people, no further testimony is requisite to evidence that we are of the same house and lineage. It is not the love of the saints that proves it, for this may exist irrespective of their national peculiarities, but it is the love of that in them that marks the character of God's children; it is the attractivenesss—the lustre—which the grace of God throws around the character, discerned; it is the charm of piety, felt.

Are you, then, believing soul, susceptible of this charm? Is there in your view no sight so lovely as the irradiation of the countenance produced by grace? and the beauty, the consistency, and usefulness, of *his* life in whom God's Spirit dwells? If, for this cause, and proportionably as you find it, you love Christians, there remains no uncertainty as to your own state,—you are a Christian. No man loves that in others to which he is himself peculiarly opposed; and all mankind are inimical to the religion of the Bible, excepting Christ's little flock. Where wealth, honour, talent,

learning, are not valued, when put in comparison with the intrinsic worth which grace imparts, it is an unequivocal sign that there are sympathetic emotions within. To love Christians because we see in them qualities that are peculiarly Christian, marks the indwelling of the Spirit. And to have learned to discern, and to prize His glorious work in others, proves a work of grace begun in us. The Scriptures are so explicit, and so conclusive upon this point, that no clearer testimony can be given than to quote from them. "We know that we have passed from death unto life," said St. John, "because we love the brethren." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," said our Lord himself, "if ye have love one to another"

CHAPTER XII.

GROVELLING NATURE OF WORLDLINESS.

The people of God and the worldly may know to which class they belong—The worldly addressed—Reason and Immortality distinguish man from the brute creation—Both profitless to the worldly—Infinite weight of eternity—Not from reason that a change in man can be anticipated—Christianity restores man to his primeval dignity—That we prize our immortality a test to judge of our state—The world placed in the balance against eternal joy and present peace.

"Op'ning the map of God's extensive plan,
We find a little isle, this life of man.
Eternity's unknown expanse appears,
Curling around, and limiting his years.
The busy race examine and explore
Each creek and cavern of the dangerous shore;
With care collect what in their eyes excels,
Some shining pebbles, and some weeds and shells;
Thus laden, dream that they are rich and great,
And happiest he that groans beneath his weight,
The waves o'ertake them in their serious play,
And every hour sweeps multitudes away;
They shriek and sink, survivors start aud weep,
Pursue their sport and follow to the deep.
A few forsake the throng; with lifted eyes
Ask wealth of heav'n, and gain a real prize."

As it is easy to distinguish the subjects of God's kingdom from the people that are around them in the world, by their manners, customs, affections,

and feelings, so there is no difficulty in distinguishing the worldly from the children of the kingdom. There is no resemblance, no similarity between them. Each is diverse from the other. What the one will do, the other will not do; what the one seeks after, the other despises; what the one loves, the other hates. Now, if this dissimilitude be so apparent, both classes may certainly know to which of them they themselves belong, by the distinctive properties that characterize them. A child of God needs not distress himself with fears that he is of the world, if he considers what it is that interests, that charms, that engrosses his heart. Nor needs a worldly character dread that he may possibly belong to God's people, when he recollects what concerns are ever uppermost in his mind, what it is that occupies his thoughts and his labours, and after which he unweariedly pursues.

Taking it then for granted that the worldly are satisfied that they are of this class,—that they entertain no doubt upon the subject,—that they know and acknowledge that they are of the people denominated worldly by the more strictly religious, we shall, in conclusion, address a few words to such, whose affections rest upon earth, and who thence derive all that they hope to enjoy.

You seek satisfaction in the things of time, and in the good a present world affords; but, are you thoroughly convinced that you would be satisfied

if you could embrace all that you desire, and pos sess every thing here that you are solicitous to obtain? Is there certainty, that even in that case, your happiness would be ensured? Perhaps you may be ready to reply that you do not doubt it. You have no other inclination, and the bestowal of what you covet is all the enjoyment you aspire after.

Let, then, the supposition be made, that, whatever is the object of your ambition, be it wealth, honour, or pleasure,—these combined,—or whatever it may be, were, to an unprecedented extent, bestowed upon you, and that the blessing was never withheld while you live. Here is a large grant of worldly good, possibly larger than has ever fallen to the lot of man. It has been formerly shown, that these things are not, in themselves, calculated to give content, but upon that argument we shall not here insist, nor attempt to shake your conviction that they are profitable and desirable; you believe them to be so, and seek no other. Yet, is there nothing that is calculated to awaken distrust and alarm in the limitation of the tenure by which all that springs from earth is held? Contemplate the boundary line that terminates your joy when at their utmost extent; they end with life; not one worldly satisfaction reaches beyond it. And can it be that your wishes are confined to these perishing enjoyments? Are you quite satisfied to live your

little day, flutter like insects in the sunshine, and then lose your all? Will happiness so sparingly dealt out suffice during an eternal existence? Is there nothing distasteful to you in the idea, that a termination must so speedily be put to your pleasures,—that they die at the longest with you? Perhaps you may reply that it is not so,—that you would willingly extend the term of your enjoyment if you could, but, as you know no joy that earth does not afford, and here you cannot abide, you submit because you must; your doom is fixed—you cannot alter it. Yet, ere you abandon hope, suffer the inquiry, Is it *possible* that *stable* bliss can be found for *you?* Oh! dismiss not the thought hastily; give it the serious consideration its importance demands. Examine carefully and impartially into the true answer of questions such as these: "Is there good that fleets not with the life of man? and may I obtain it?—Are there imperishable riches? and may I possess them? God, in his Word, affirms, that there are joys which depend upon, and emanate from, Himself, which neither cloy nor wither; that there are treasures which have no tendency to decay. And the condition upon which they are bestowed,—O listen earthly pilgrim!—is, that they are *asked!* However expensively they have been prepared, they are freely *given.* And, is there not folly in the neglect of this boon? And is there not wisdom in the

search after it? Die, O worldling, you must, to sublunary joy!—live, you may, in eternal blessedness!

But, hitherto, we have taken the most favourable view of earthly enjoyments; we have supposed them large as they can be, and enduring while life lasts. Have you found them thus great, thus durable, poor deluded votary of the world? Have they never palled upon your taste, and the sweet become bitter? Has pleasure, while you grasped it, never escaped from your hold? or, the more you seemed to possess it, has it not become the less desirable? Have you never said of life itself, "I loathe it!" And if it be but a shadow of good that you obtain on earth, and this vanishing phantom only for a day, how little is it to be coveted?—It is worthless, it is useless.

But there are grovelling spirits to be met with, who have no hesitation in avowing, that the pleasures of earth content them. Worldly gratifications are quite to their taste; they are satisfied with them, and they do not trouble themselves with the idea that they will soon end. If these pleasures are short-lived, they will at least have their day of earth's transitory enjoyments; and let the term be longer or shorter, they have no relish for any bliss that is more elevated or pure. They believe in no joy of which they do not at present feel themselves susceptible. They possess

what they desire; futurity is too distant to interest them. Let *eternity* provide for itself!

Of one thing, earthworms, you surely are devoid, and that is—ambition! If a life-rent is all you ask, when perpetuity is offered, you aspire to little. Know you not, that

"Perpetuity of bliss alone is bliss?"

Can it be, that a few years,—it may be, hours of pleasure,—will suffice for an immortal soul? Can satisfaction for eternity be found in a day? Your contentment is at variance with the belief of man's unending existence. It is a tacit denial of the immortality of the soul; it is levelling, it is pitiful! Methinks the race of men should rise in arms against a kinsman who thus degrades their species, and would confine their happiness to the low enjoyments that may be gleaned during the short span of human life. Let the worldling gather honey, if he can, from earth's flowers; let him beware of affirming, that there are not more luxuriant plants, filled with richer sweets, within his reach, and that these are not held out to his acceptance, beyond the grave, would he receive them.

There are two things that more especially distinguish man from the brute creation,—reason and immortality. Deprive him of these, and he becomes on a level with the lower animals. And those worldly men who content themselves with

earthly joy, desiring nothing better, casting higher hopes from them, in fact resign their claim to either of these ennobling characteristics.

What proof of reason does that man give who clings to the lowest, and is unwilling to receive the highest good; who cares not to give up, without any equivalent, unutterable and everlasting blessedness? Reason, surely, there is none here. A creature devoid of it might select the worse, and leave the infinitely better; but not so him in whom intellectual capacity dwells. The worldly, who act thus in the most important of all concerns, must admit, that their claim to rational endowment, or at least to their exercising the powers of the understanding, is gone. Their intellect, in this case, is not exerted, and therefore it is void.

Nor do the worldly propose to make more use of the other ennobling quality we have specified —namely, immortality. Of what benefit is the term of endless years to him who expects no enjoyment in them,—whose pleasures are of the earth, earthy? Were heaven and its blessedness swept from the universe, it were matter of no concern to that man, who values not the most valuable part of his existence, and would resign it if he might He abandons the exhaustless fountain of pure joy, that is open and offered to his acceptance, and strives to quench his thirst with the dregs of polluted, worldly pleasure, which never satisfy. And

is there not an assimilation to the inferior animals here, in the low estimation in which immortality is held, and the conception, which seems rooted in the minds of the worldly, that that which elevates and dignifies humanity is not conducive to the happiness of man? If our felicity springs exclusively from earth, so does that of the worm that enters its recesses, or crawls on its surface. And is man willing to be degraded to an equality with the most grovelling species having life?—man, who is "noble in reason! infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel!"

> "Though sullied and dishonour'd, still divine!
> Dim miniature of greatness absolute!"

Shall *he* cleave to the dust, and be content to grovel with the grub, or, if he rise at all, merely to flutter with the butterfly? It may be so; but he is lost to the superiority of his nature over creatures in rank infinitely subordinate. Oh! it is grievous to see an immortal soul despise the privileges of his immortality, and hug the chains which confine his happiness within the narrow limits of his existence on earth!

> "Yet man, fool man! here buries all his thoughts:
> Inters celestial hopes without one sigh.
> Pris'ner of earth, and pent beneath the moon,
> Here pinions all his wishes: Wing'd by heav'n
> To fly at infinite; and reach it there
> Where seraphs gather immortality.
> On Life's fair tree, fast by the throne of God,

What golden joys ambrosial clust'ring glow
In His full beam!"

For these the worldly neither look nor hunger, but still would feed on husks of earthly growth, scanty and unsatisfying although they be.

"There is a spirit in man," said Elihu, "and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." How, then, is the spirit abased, and the understanding become darkened! How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed! Alas! for man, if immortality is profitless to him! The weighty gift of an infinite duration of bliss accounted useless and tasteless! Could he divest himself of this proud distinction, immortality, he would be lowered in the scale of being, sunk in grade among the creation of God. But this he cannot do. Be it ever remembered, immortal he must still remain. To renounce his immortality, the powers of man are totally inadequate. And let the dread thought be forcibly impressed upon the mind,—when immortality ceases to be the greatest blessing, it becomes necessarily the great est curse!—for its endless ages, if not spent in bliss, must be spent in wo! But this is a hackneyed theme, and therefore makes no impression. We speak of endless happiness and misery as we do of the occurrences of a day,—a conception of the full meaning of the words is not entertained by us. The force, the boundlessness of the ideas,

is never felt. The entire sense the words convey does not reach the mind. It is to be questioned if *any* man *ever* conceived of the awful importance attached to the expressions, *endless bliss* and *endless wo.* As we journey onward in another sphere, blissful, or the sad reverse, the infinite weight of eternity may by degrees open upon us. And as its importance becomes gradually unfolded, we shall be inclined to startle, as well as marvel, at its infinitude, while lengthened terms elapse, and its duration is not shortened! What continuity cannot lessen, or extent of years abridge, is without a limit, an idea which bewilders the senses. And whether we shall ever be enabled to grasp the idea in another world, or when even a slight perception of eternity may begin to be developed, remains unknown to us.

Oh! votary of the world, pause ere you rush headlong into wretchedness thus absorbing, thus interminable! Can it be that you shudder not to plunge into the gulf of endless perdition! Shall not the burning of unquenchable fire produce continued anguish? Shall not the gnawings of the worm that never dies inflict perpetual torture? Well may you be willing to renounce your immortality, if your existence must be thus hopelessly miserable! But "why will you die?" is the language addressed to you in Holy Writ. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith

your God, turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways and live."

However reasonable the course here suggested may be, it is not from reason that any change in worldly characters can be anticipated. The heart of man, unrenewed by grace, is so abhorrent of true religion, that it is almost ready to run the risk of unlimited suffering, and to take the chance of what futurity may produce, rather than adopt this hated remedy. It is too true, that in our native state we "cannot serve the Lord,"* that no service is so distasteful, none so repugnant to the natural bent of man's inclinations, as obedience to the commands of a Holy God. Yet without this subserviency of heart to our Creator we are lost. God and man must be united in design and in desire, if man is to be rendered happy; from opposition to God there must ensue misery. But "He is of one mind, and who can turn him," and from everlasting to everlasting the same. It is not possible that God should change—perfection admits not of change. To alter aught in God is to make his excellencies less transcendently glorious. That which has attained the highest altitude cannot ascend, but if moved in the scale must be lowered. And shall God stoop to meet the imperfections of man? It cannot be. The nature of the Supreme

* Joshua xxiv. 19.

is stationary, without rise or fall. Throughout eternity it remains, infinitely and beyond conception, exalted above that of the creature, incapable of the slightest deviation from the height of perfection!

If this be admitted, and if it be true that man's nature, since the fall, is at variance with the perfections of Jehovah, and that assimilation between God and man is necessary to man's happiness, it follows that in order to effect it, a change must take place in the human soul. This change is at once glorious and elevating. It transforms the faculties that were fettered to earth, into those which are heavenly in their origin and tendency. And one noble effect of this transformation is in the satisfaction, the delight, that is experienced from the knowledge of man's immortality. Boundless duration is no longer spurned as of little value, or dreaded as a curse, but is felt to be unspeakably precious, and is received as the gift which enhances beyond expression, that of life. The nature is fitted for the reception of the matchless boon, and it is received with gratitude. The man who is born from above is not content with the inferior animal's destiny. *He seeks not to perish everlastingly!* He grovels no longer, licking the dust. He finds earth beneath the level to which his ambition rises. With avidity he grasps an eternal and unfading crown! Elevation of soul

is present, and man is restored to his primeval dignity!

My reader! has this ennobling change passed upon you? There is a test by which to judge of it; how do you stand affected as it regards immortality? Is eternity your desire, or your dread? Are your thoughts respecting it pleasing, or the reverse? Or is it that of which you think not at all? You cannot value what never costs you a thought; and if you value not this high distinction of man, there is a grovelling taint that lurks within, there is earthliness, there are symptoms of base extraction, there is a sordid defilement on the soul, there is an influence that levels, that subordinates.

But possibly you may satisfy yourself with the conviction that you wish for the continuance of your existence, that you are averse to the idea of perishing with the brutes, that you feel the "secret dread and inward terror of falling into nought." And who does not feel it, when the awful thought is brought home with power to the mind? The soul naturally "shrinks back on herself, and startles at destruction." Yet this feeling may exist, and still you may be a stranger to that which proves that your treasure is in heaven, delight in the prospect of immortality. It is an immortal existence spent as you would have it that you desire, and not that happiness which is bestowed as the highest boon on God's most favoured creatures, in which purity

of heart forms the essence. The *reality* of eternal blessedness you prize not; wherefore, till you are taught to prize it, there is no help from God himself for you! Oh! seek then that change which is described by the sacred penman as a passing "from death unto life." That man is in a state of eternal death, to whom eternal life is inaccessible; if he cannot reach life, death is the only alternative. Let your ardent supplications, therefore, ascend unto Him who by the cross "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." Fervently pray that you may be rendered meet for the endless bliss he died to purchase. One requisite you possess,—immortality; add to it an interest in the Redeemer's blood, and you are eternally blessed.

But have you, believer in Jesus, learned fully to prize your immortality? Have you considered the extent, the boundlessness, the preciousness, of immortal joy? Strive to acquaint yourself with some faint conception, of continued, lengthened, joyful periods elapsing, without deducting one particle from the term still to elapse. Think of blessedness in continuity, until it seems scarcely possible but that of necessity it must subside or be exhausted, and yet that at the longest space of its duration, there will be infinitely more to succeed than ever has passed! The impossibility of subtraction constitutes eternity; extent of time having no power

to diminish, or make the future less. The sum of periods, and consequently of joy in reserve (when all are joyful) remains stationary at the highest point of calculation, and can never be lowered by the sweep of ages! The thought is overwhelming, but it is overwhelmingly joyous! Taste the joy, believing soul, *now*, that it is calculated to afford,—it will not deduct from the amplitude that is to come,—you cannot lessen eternity's bliss. What you take per advance is gain, is surplus; eternal joy remains untouched, unaltered!

Against the weight of this blessedness let us place "the world,"—all that it ever has given, all that it ever can give. Is the balance equal? Can a few days or years weigh against eternity? It cannot be; even if the degree of joy experienced during the same period were alike; but here, again, the default on the side of the world is immense; in measure as in continuance heaven's bliss is infinitely superior. The largest amount of worldly blessing is not to be named as an equivalent for the loss of God's blessedness! And will the largest amount of worldly blessing compensate for the endurance of the fire of God's wrath? Ah! no. Let it then be deeply impressed upon the mind that the world's pleasures are baubles not worth the possessing; its smiles, trifles not worth the coveting; its frowns, being quickly at an end, not worthy to be dreaded.

We cannot, however, conclude, without reminding our readers that this is not a fair statement of the fact; it is not in futurity only that the believer's happiness exceeds that of other men; in the present life the joys of the Christian greatly surpass those of the worldly, inasmuch as they are the joys in which God himself delights, and the enjoyments of the world, those of degraded, fallen creatures. Let us then seek the substance, not the shadow of bliss. And let it be our unwearied endeavour, as well as our highest ambition, to attain that blessedness which is satisfying, ennobling, and eternal!

FINIS.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01005 1235